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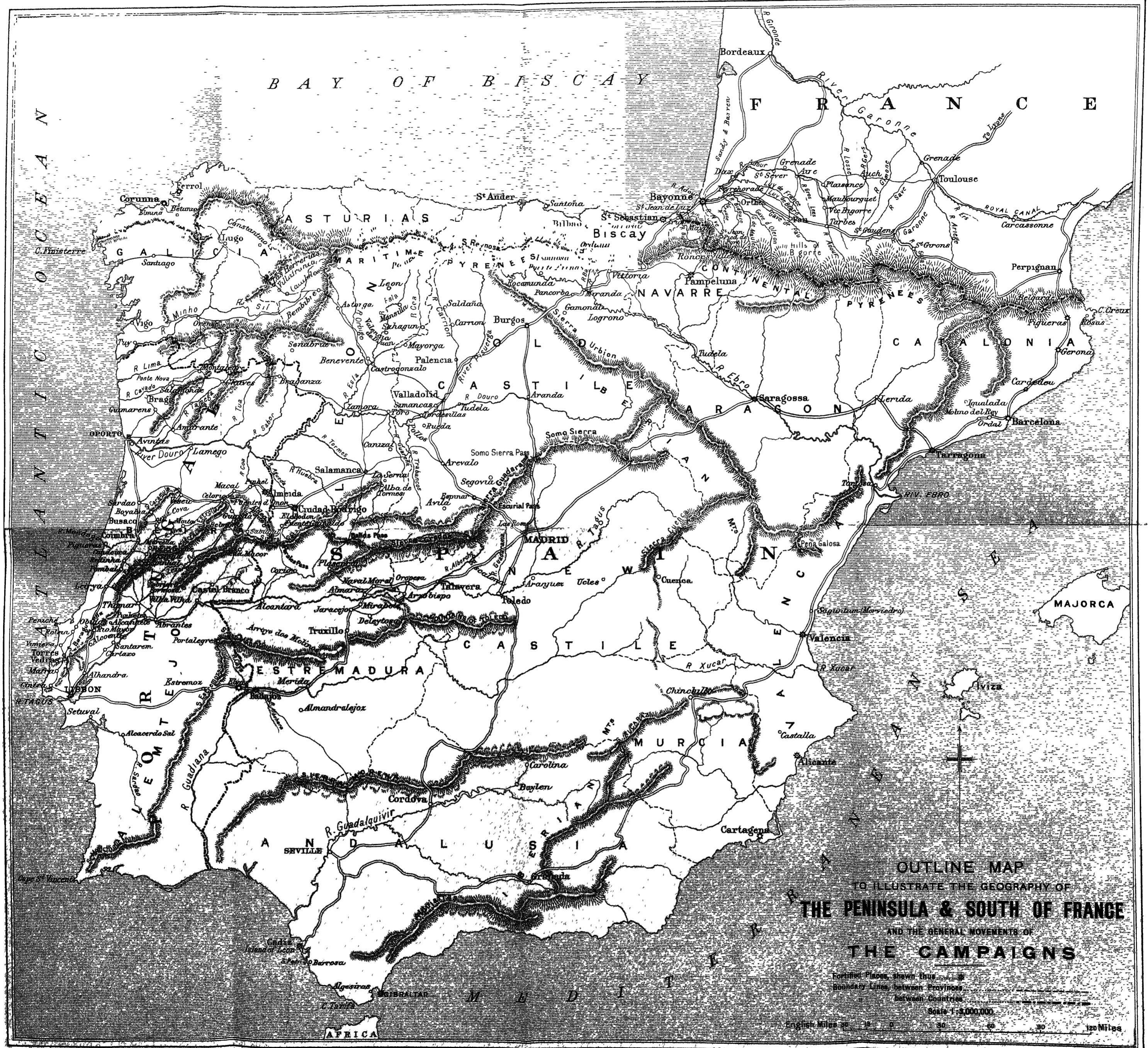


WELLINGTON'S CAMPAIGNS  
1808-15

ALSO MOORE'S CAMPAIGN OF CORUNNA

PART II  
1811-12-13  
*BARROSA TO VITTORIA  
AND  
INVASION OF FRANCE*







# WELLINGTON'S CAMPAIGNS

PENINSULA—WATERLOO

1808-15

ALSO MOORE'S CAMPAIGN OF CORUNNA

(*FOR MILITARY STUDENTS*)

BY

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*WITH SKETCH MAPS, AND PLANS.*

THIRD EDITION

PART II

1811-12-13

BARROSA TO VITTORIA  
AND  
INVASION OF FRANCE

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## CHAPTER VIII

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### CAMPAIGN IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN, 1811

(FIRST PERIOD)

OPERATIONS NEAR CADIZ—BARROSA—RETREAT OF  
MASSENA FROM BEFORE THE LINES OF TORRES  
VEDRAS—EXPULSION OF THE FRENCH FROM PORTUGAL  
FOR THE THIRD TIME

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THE campaign of 1811, like that of 1809, may be divided conveniently into two periods: the first defensive—*i.e.* the expulsion from Portugal of the invading army of Massena; the second offensive, being preparatory to Wellington's campaign against the French in Spain in 1812.

The operations of 1811 have been viewed by some as forming, perhaps, among all the Peninsular campaigns, the most complete illustration of Wellington's mastery of the art of war.

Though not marked by such brilliant victories as that of Salamanca in 1812, and Vittoria in 1813, they made evident to the world his superiority as a leader in both defensive and offensive war; his skill in strategy as well as tactics; his marvellous resource in overcoming difficulties;

## 151 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (1ST PERIOD)

Jan.  
1811

his discernment of the weak points of his adversary; and his power of handling a small army so as to baffle and overcome a far more numerous one. It placed beyond question his right to be ranked among the great military commanders of the world.

The campaign was in a large measure one of battles, sieges, and close fighting in various quarters; but at the same time it affords striking lessons in the broader movements of strategy. It had also a very important bearing upon the struggle for the freedom of the Peninsula, and it opened with two events of great interest and consequence—viz. the defeat of the French under Victor at Barrosa near Cadiz in Spain, and the retreat of Massena from before the lines of Torres Vedras in Portugal.

It has been mentioned that Massena at the close of 1810, finding his passage to Lisbon barred by the lines of Torres Vedras, while a long extent of half desolate and hostile country lay between him and his nearest supports, had sent General Foy to Napoleon imploring aid. The Emperor, however, had already determined in his own mind upon the invasion of Russia; and partly upon this account, and partly because he considered that the forces of Massena and Soult should be of themselves a match for the Allies, he refused to aid Massena further than by directing Soult to act vigorously in his support from the direction of Badajoz.

In accordance with this order Soult, early in January, 1811, having left a force (under Marshal

Victor) to keep up the blockade of Cadiz, marched towards Badajoz, invested it on January 26th, and took it from the Spaniards, who defended it with but little determination, on March 10th. This siege is called the *French Siege of Badajoz*.

But he had hardly captured Badajoz when he was informed that his troops blockading Cadiz were in danger, so, leaving a garrison in the captured fortress, he returned to aid them.

This peril to the blockading force at Cadiz, which brought Soult back there, arose as follows :—

An expedition, consisting of 5,000 British troops, with some Portuguese and a Spanish contingent (about 11,000 in all), had left Cadiz by sea on January 21st, 1811, under Sir Thomas Graham (afterwards Lord Lynedoch), with the object of proceeding eastward to Tarifa; and, after a junction with some other troops in that neighbourhood, attacking the French force near Cadiz in rear—the blockaded garrison co-operating on their approach by issuing from the works.

The vessels conveying this expedition were carried by adverse winds past Tarifa; but, landing at Algesiras, marched to that place; and, on January 27th, 1811, the Allies moved forward from Tarifa, General La Pena, a Spaniard, being in chief command.

On the march they were joined by a body of Spanish guerillas, and had some sharp fighting with the French. Victor, as they neared Cadiz, came out from his lines, formed up under cover of a neighbouring wood, and prepared to oppose

## 153 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (1ST PERIOD)

March 5, their attempt to raise the siege. This brought  
1811 on the

### BATTLE OF BARROSA

*March 5th, 1811*

(See plan facing page 159)

In this battle the Allies, under La Pena, including the Spanish guerilla bands, numbered about 13,000, with 24 guns; and of these some 4,000, under Graham, were British.

The French, under Victor, were about 15,000 strong; a further force of 5,000 supporting troops being at only a few miles' distance.

The ridge of Barrosa, which was occupied by the Allies on March 5th, is about four miles from the sea-mouth of the ship canal of Santi Petri, which here forms the boundary of the island of Leon, on which was situated the strongly fortified city and harbour of Cadiz.

Across this canal the garrison of Cadiz were to endeavour to throw a bridge, by which to communicate with the Allies as they approached; and this, it may be here said, they subsequently succeeded in doing.

The ridge of Barrosa runs inland from the sea-shore for about a mile and a half, commanding a small, broken plain in front of it, while between it and the Santi Petri was another ridge, called the Bermeja Hill.

The plain between these two elevated ridges was bordered by the sea on one side and a close country (consisting of a belt of pines and the forest of Chiclana) on the other.

The commanding ridge of Barrosa was a most important position for the Allies to retain possession of, while they advanced down from it towards the Bermeja Hill and the Santi Petri; and Graham urged La Pena to leave sufficient troops to hold it when they moved into the plain below. La Pena, however, disregarding this advice, directed Graham to advance through the wood to the Bermeja Hill, and having with a Spanish force managed to open communication across the Santi Petri with the Cadiz garrison, left the Barrosa ridge himself, taking with him all his troops, with the exception of a small force, which remained there as a rear-guard, and to protect the baggage massed upon the ridge.

Seeing no large body of the enemy in his front, and not having examined the Chiclana Forest to his right, he then advanced towards the Santi Petri by a road close to the sea-shore.

But during these movements, Victor, with 9,000 men and 14 guns, hidden from view in the Chiclana woods, had been closely watching the Allies with his scouts. Ascertaining that their forces were scattered—Graham being in the wooded ground, the Spaniards on the sea road moving to the Bermeja Hill, and the baggage, with protecting troops of no great strength, massed on the Barrosa ridge—he issued with three French divisions, under Laval, Villatte, and Ruffin, to attack the Allies.

Laval moved against Graham's flank; Villatte against the Spaniards in the direction of the Santi Petri, where the garrison of Cadiz had thrown a

## 155 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (1ST PERIOD)

March 5, bridge across the canal ; and Ruffin, ascending the  
1811 Barrosa ridge from the reverse side, from the north, carried the height, drove off and dispersed the rear-guard, scattered the baggage, and compelled the small British baggage-guard, under Major Brown, to fall back.

This officer retired slowly, and in good order, into the plain, sending to Graham for instructions.

The Allies were now in a dangerous position ; Graham had to decide whether to move on to the Bermeja Hill, and endeavour to reach the Santi Petri, and thence Cadiz ; or to attack the French who were on his flank, and (together with a number of fugitives) pressing upon his rear. La Pena's Spaniards towards the sea were neither visible nor in touch with him.

He took the bold course, and directing Brown to turn and fight, faced about himself, and made a counter-attack upon Laval and Ruffin, although he saw that the Barrosa ridge was already in the enemy's hands.

A fierce contest now ensued, the British fighting with desperate determination to extricate themselves from their position. The French being in their rear, their baggage lost, and with no certainty of being able to reach Cadiz, it was necessary for them to conquer, or submit to a defeat which would probably be disastrous.

In this juncture, Graham, with his troops, rose to the occasion.

Attacking Laval and Ruffin with two separate masses of men, hastily got together "without" (writes Napier) "attention to regiments or brigades, so

sudden was the affair," the British not only checked the French advance, but eventually, so resolute was their onset, overthrew them, drove them back, and, after sustaining heavy loss themselves, regained the Barrosa heights.

In this attack the 87th Regiment (now the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers) under Major (afterwards Viscount) Gough, captured the eagle of the French 8th Regiment\*; and the British artillery—10 guns—under Major Duncan, by its accurate and rapid fire, contributed largely to the success attained.

The broken French endeavoured, after they had rallied, to renew the battle, but Duncan's guns caused them such heavy loss that they gave up the effort, and Victor withdrew his troops from the field.

La Pena had rendered no aid to Graham in this struggle; and the British, having been marching or fighting for many hours without food, were too exhausted to pursue.

The battle of Barrosa itself lasted only one and a half hours, but the British loss was 50 officers and nearly 1,200 men. The French loss was over 2,000, with 6 guns and an eagle. Generals Ruffin and Chaudron-Rousseau were mortally wounded.

After the battle Graham remained for some hours on the Barrosa height. The French were now in full retreat towards the village of Chiclana, and he hoped that La Pena would attack them; but that general, though he had been joined by 4,000 more troops from Cadiz (who had crossed

\* Taken by Sergeant Masterson, who received a commission for the capture.

## 157 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (1ST PERIOD)

March 5, 1811, the Santi Petri), and had a force of 12,000 infantry and 800 cavalry under his command, made no effort to pursue.

Graham, therefore, determining that he could no longer carry on field operations in concert with him, crossed the Santi Petri, leaving him on the Bermeja Hill, and re-entered Cadiz, whither La Pena soon followed him. Victor, a short time afterwards, observing that the Allies made no advance, resumed the blockade, and was subsequently joined by Soult.

“Barrosa,” as a bar to the Peninsular medal, and a battle-honour, commemorates the battle; and the 87th Regiment was granted for it an eagle, with wreath of laurel round it, for a badge. In explanation of this badge it is interesting to mention that the captured eagle had round its neck a metal wreath, granted (an exceptional distinction) by the Emperor Napoleon to commemorate, it is said, the gallantry of the French 8th Regiment at the battle of Talavera.

This trophy was eventually deposited in the chapel of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, where its original staff and a facsimile of the eagle still remain; but the eagle itself was broken off and stolen in 1852, shortly after the funeral of the Duke of Wellington—previous to which the Duke’s body had lain in state in the hall of the hospital. It has never since been recovered.

The battle of Barrosa was a victory, because the French attack was defeated with loss, and Victor’s troops driven back; but the object for which the

Allied expedition set out—viz. to raise the siege March 5, of Cadiz—was not attained. No permanent result followed the battle, because the Spaniards, neither during the contest nor after it, co-operated duly. Had they done so Victor's defeat would most probably have been more complete, and the raising of the siege of Cadiz would have followed upon it.

Graham, like Sir Arthur Wellesley at Talavera, had found that he could not work effectively with the Spanish leaders, who, though they and their troops showed much gallantry at times, were difficult to deal with in many respects.

The battle affords a notable instance of how gallantry and resolution may wrest victory out of impending defeat, and troops emerge, through these qualities, triumphant out of danger. It forms another illustration, also, of a successful counter-stroke in battle made under the difficult circumstances of having to turn about and retake a height from an enemy who has already obtained the advantage of securing a position there, on the line of retreat.

Wellington's soldiers in the battles of the Peninsular War and at Waterloo set an example of cool and determined courage to their successors for all time.

The bold course which Graham took was probably also the most prudent, for, pressed by the victorious French and followed by many fugitives from the Barrosa ridge, it would have been extremely difficult for him to pass the narrow bridge over the Santi Petri, and reach the island of Leon.

## 159 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (1ST PERIOD)

March 5, We need dwell no further upon the operations  
1811 in this portion of Spain than to say that the battle  
of Barrosa shows the danger which may be incurred  
by advancing past a wood or forest like that of  
Chiclana without first reconnoitring it, and to  
mention that the great value of Cadiz, both to the  
British and the French, lay in the fact that whoever  
held it was in possession of a fortified port which  
a fleet could enter, and that while the British  
occupied it the French domination in Andalusia  
was necessarily incomplete.

We now revert to Wellington's operations in Portugal.

### RETREAT OF MASSENA

On the same day (March 5th, 1811) on which the battle of Barrosa was fought near Cadiz, Massena commenced to retreat from before the lines of Torres Vedras.

Up to this time he had remained in the position which he held at the close of 1810, waiting for Soult to move northward, the ground he occupied being both naturally strong, and strengthened by earthworks. The hostile armies of the French and Allies had thus faced each other throughout January and February, 1811, divided only by a bridge at the end of a narrow causeway across a marsh, which was mined by the Allies, and on the other hand commanded by French guns.

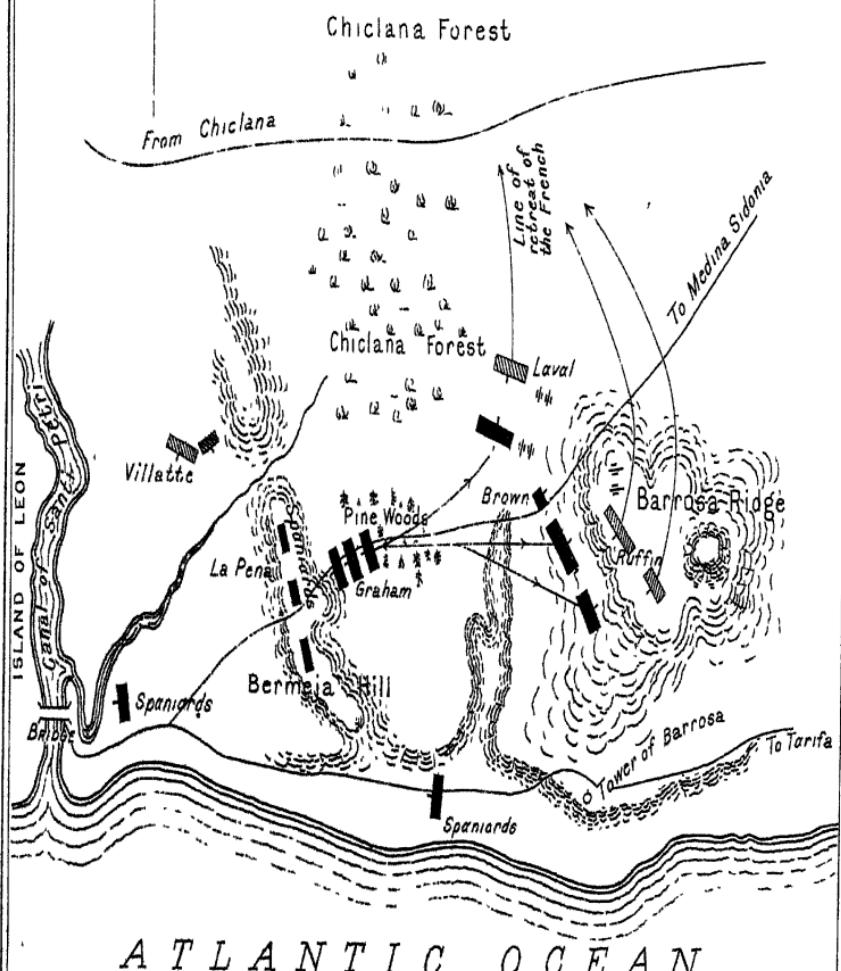
We have mentioned the instructions which had been issued by Wellington to the Portuguese peasantry, before the Allied retreat to the lines,





BATTLE OF  
BARROSA

5<sup>th</sup> March  
1811



0 English Miles  
1/2 1  
Stanford's Geog<sup>t</sup> Estab<sup>r</sup> London

Allies.....  
French.....



to destroy all their crops, and to carry off their cattle, so as to leave no food available for the French. This order was partially carried out, but only partially. One can understand the difficulty there must have been in enforcing such a decree under the circumstances of a hurried retreat, and the natural reluctance to obey it on the part of the peasants. As a fact, although most of the mills were destroyed, the movables carried off, and the country abandoned—250,000 Portuguese retiring towards the lines and across the Tagus—yet large tracts of land covered with wheat remained untouched, especially near Santarem, so that Massena had been able to subsist his troops longer than ought to have been the case.

But by March 5th, 1811, his army had fallen into such great distress, and his necessities had become so urgent, that he could delay no longer for Soult, and having heard also that reinforcements were arriving at Lisbon for Wellington (some 7,000 men had landed), he at last gave way. After a feint to cross the Zezere and attack Abrantes, he sent off in advance his baggage and what stores he could move; blew up the works he had established at Punhete, with the view of constructing a bridge over the Tagus; and destroying some of his baggage and what guns he could not horse, commenced in the night his celebrated retreat out of Portugal.

The horrors of this retreat can hardly be exaggerated. As the French, pressed by Wellington, fell back through the wasted districts in their rear, they perished in great numbers from hunger and

## 161 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (1ST PERIOD)

March  
5-10,  
1811

the sword ; and in their fury and exasperation, marked their track by murder, rapine, and burning villages.

Massena retired in two columns. Junot and Montbrun's cavalry, followed by Ney, by Thomar and Leirya, making for Pombal and Coimbra ; a flanking force marching by Thomar and Espinal on Murcella. (See map facing page 173.) A portion of Ney's corps remained behind long enough to complete the destruction of the stores at Punhete, and then followed the main body.

By March 8th the whole army was on the move, and Wellington, as soon as he was sure that Massena was in full retreat, and did not contemplate an attack on the lines from the direction of Leirya, ordered a portion of the Allied force towards Badajoz, having heard of the investment of that fortress by Soult. With the rest of the army he followed Massena, his divisions marching through Thomar and Leirya to Pombal, except one brigade, which from Thomar followed the French flanking force towards Espinal.

Wellington sent orders also from Thomar to the Portuguese to break up the roads between the Mondego and the Douro, remove all boats from these rivers, and look to the security of Oporto.

The French, however, had gained a start of nearly four days upon their pursuers.

On March 10th Wellington at Pombal (see map facing page 173) came up with Ney, commanding Massena's rear-guard, whose object it was to keep back the Allies by taking up strong positions on the line of retreat (which Wellington must

turn, or bring up his troops in order of battle March to attack), retiring from them before a superior <sup>10-13,</sup> <sub>1811</sub> force of his enemy could close with him.

Wellington saw that the position at Pombal was strong, and that Massena appeared determined to fight, so having heard that Badajoz could hold out for some time longer, he counter-ordered the troops he had directed towards that fortress, instructing them to join him.

But on the night of the 10th, Ney, after a short skirmish at Pombal, and several manœuvres to delay the Allies, retired to another strong position near Redinha, showing such a bold front that Wellington, uncertain whether the whole French army was not behind him in support, was compelled to make detailed dispositions for the attack.

Detaching divisions (on March 12th) to the right and left with a view to turn Ney's flanks, he was about to move himself against the centre, when Ney, having opposed his progress as far as he dare, set fire to Redinha, and rapidly withdrew towards Condeixa.

Now Massena had given Ney, whom he had strengthened with a portion of Junot's corps, stringent orders to make a very determined stand in front of Condeixa, while he (Massena) sent Montbrun's cavalry to reconnoitre the roads towards Coimbra and Murcella, and if possible seize the former place, so that the French could retreat through it towards Oporto. Ney took up a position, accordingly, covering Condeixa, Montbrun proceeding to Coimbra; but the Allies coming up

## 163 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (1ST PERIOD)

March  
13-14,  
1811

in Ney's front on March 13th, and a division having been detached to turn his left, he, in fear of being cut off from the road through Miranda \* to Murcella, as well as prevented from crossing the Mondego at Coimbra, set fire to Condeixa and retired (sacrificing part of his baggage) to Cazal Nova, whither Massena, on hearing that Ney had abandoned Condeixa, had also ordered Junot to fall back.

The French on their retreat to Cazal Nova were in a critical situation. Montbrun had, on nearing Coimbra, found the bridge destroyed and the Portuguese in position on the right bank. He was unable to move by Condeixa, which Ney was abandoning, and so was forced to try and join Massena by a circuitous and difficult route up the Deuca River to Miranda ; while Wellington, by moving two of his divisions round Ney's left flank, pressed the French hard, endeavouring to forestall them at Cazal Nova, to cut in between Ney and Junot, and to intercept the French flanking force (under Reynier) at Miranda, which was marching from Thomar, by Espinalhal, on Murcella.

The Allies, however, though they caused great distress to the French, and nearly cut off Ney from Junot, did not completely attain their objects ; Ney showed fight in every available position, and both Montbrun and Reynier eventually succeeded in joining him at Miranda.

On the 14th there was a sharp engagement at Cazal Nova, whence Ney, having again destroyed

\* This village is called sometimes "Miranda" and sometimes "Miranda de Corvo."

a quantity of baggage and ammunition to lighten his march, retired through Miranda, burning that village, to Foz d'Arouce on the River Ceira.

Experience had now shown Wellington the various ruses to which Ney resorted, as well as his real object and approximate strength. He therefore pressed him vigorously from point to point. Every position the French assumed was quickly turned or attacked, Wellington constantly resorting to turning movements, and the retreat went steadily on. At Foz d'Arouce there was an engagement on the 15th with the Allies, and subsequently a French eagle thrown into the River Ceira was recovered.\* After this Wellington sent off Beresford with a considerable force to recapture Badajoz—of the fall of which, to the French, on March 10th, he had received intelligence—while he himself continued the pursuit of Massena.

From Foz d'Arouce the French retired behind the Alva, blowing up the bridge over the Ceira; but finding the one over the Mondego cut, and the Portuguese on the right bank, were forced to keep to the south of the latter river.

At Moita Wellington was reluctantly obliged to halt, as he had outrun all his supplies, and had to procure them from the mouth of the Mondego. This gave Massena some breathing time, and on March 21st, having destroyed yet more of his baggage and ammunition, he reached Celorico and Guarda.

He now determined to move by Sabugal into

\* This eagle, which belonged to the French 39th Regiment, is now in the chapel of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea.

March 22 the valley of the Tagus, and endeavour to unite  
to April 5, 1811 with Joseph or Soult, instead of retiring to  
Almeida, on the road to which place he might be  
opposed by the Portuguese moving up the right  
bank of the Mondego; but Ney, becoming some-  
what insubordinate, had, before he could be  
stopped, already marched a short distance towards  
Almeida. This, and the fact of provisions being  
very scarce, caused delay, and prevented Massena  
from carrying out his resolve. He now deprived  
Ney of his command, and having been attacked by  
Wellington at Guarda on March 29th, marched  
to Sabugal, resolving to retreat, if pressed, to  
Ciudad-Rodrigo.

On April 1st he was again attacked by Wellington  
in his position near Sabugal, on the right bank of  
the Coa. Here there was a sharp fight, owing to a  
brigade of the Light Division coming unexpectedly  
in a thick fog into contact with a very superior  
French force. The British troops held their ground  
on this occasion so tenaciously that Wellington  
described the action in his despatch as "one of the  
most glorious British troops were ever engaged in."

Massena's left having in this action been skilfully  
turned, he retired over the Portuguese frontier on  
April 5th, 1811, falling back on Ciudad-Rodrigo,  
and thence to Salamanca.

Thus Massena was driven out of Portugal,  
having suffered great hardships, and lost, since he  
entered it, 30,000 men, of whom many had died  
of starvation or disease, and about 6,000 perished  
in the retreat alone.

## COMMENTS ON THE RETREAT

The retreat of Massena, and his pursuit by Wellington, afford lessons of great military value.

The line by which the French retired—viz. that by Pombal and Leirya upon Coimbra—should be first considered.

When Massena broke up from Santarem he might instead have retired by the following lines :—

1st. Across the Zezere to Vilha Velha, and thence by Castel-Branco and Coria towards Madrid (to join Joseph).

2nd. By Sobriera Formosa to Castel-Branco, and thence by Pena Macor and Sabugal to Almeida.

If he had fallen back by the 1st line he would have been able to communicate more easily with Soult, and would have drawn the Allies away from Almeida and Ciudad-Rodrigo. This would have been a great advantage. On the other hand, the roads were very indifferent and the country barren ; and as the Allies were about Abrantes, and could move on the left bank of the Tagus from thence to Vilha Velha by a good road, they might have fore-stalled him either from Abrantes or Vilha Velha, or fallen upon him in flank as he marched.

If he had fallen back by the 2nd line he was certain of encountering extremely bad roads, broken up at points by Wellington ; and here also he would have been in danger of the Allies crossing the Tagus and taking him in flank or rear.

In retiring as he did towards Coimbra he avoided any great risk from the Allies near Abrantes ; and

if he could seize Coimbra he might then decide whether to wait there, or proceed to Oporto, or retire to Almeida, according to circumstances. The roads by this line were also not so bad as by the others.

Thus, as a choice among difficulties, the line taken by Massena appears to have been the best, as being beset by the fewest dangers ; but having taken it, it became a point of great moment to him to secure the passage of the Mondego at Coimbra.

Condeixa and Coimbra had then become points of great strategical importance to him, for his position was this :—

If he could pass the Mondego at Coimbra he would reach the comparatively unexhausted district between the Mondego and the Douro, where he could obtain supplies and possibly reinforcements, and whence further retreat would be in any case less difficult than if he were forced to take the road to Murcella, through Miranda.

He might, especially if he could seize Oporto, maintain himself in Northern Portugal, obliging Wellington to come very far north before he could drive him (Massena) over the Portuguese boundary.

At Condeixa the roads to Coimbra and Murcella branch off. Therefore if Massena were driven north beyond Condeixa, he would be cut off from the branch road to Murcella, in which case he must force the passage of the Mondego at Coimbra or take to difficult mountain tracks, with the probable loss of his artillery and baggage.

It was, therefore, his special object to secure

Coimbra ; and when Montbrun reported to him that the bridge there was broken and the enemy on the opposite bank of the river, it became an urgent matter to him to maintain Condeixa till he could withdraw his baggage and guns towards Miranda.

Possibly Montbrun, by a determined effort, might have driven off the Portuguese at the bridge of Coimbra, and Massena might have succeeded in repairing this bridge and crossing there ; but it must be remembered that Wellington was pressing hard upon Ney at Condeixa, and had the French not decided at once to take the road thence to Miranda, the opportunity of doing so might have been lost.

As it was, Montbrun was very nearly cut off, and some of the French baggage had to be sacrificed, as it could not be withdrawn.

Massena blamed Ney for not having remained longer at Condeixa. As to this, it may be said that while some have held the view that Ney at this particular juncture did not do his best—because he was personally averse to retiring in any other direction than to Almeida, and also was not on cordial terms with Massena—still, there is no doubt that his left flank was being turned by the Allies when he abandoned the village.

But whether Ney evacuated Condeixa rather sooner than he possibly need have done, or not—a very moot point—all historians have agreed that both he and Massena showed military capacity of a high order in the general conduct of this retreat.

Massena, by sending on his baggage and

impedimenta well in advance, and marching by Leiryá, gained valuable time, and kept Wellington uncertain as to his real intentions.

Ney, by the judicious handling of the rear-guard and the strong positions which he occupied, delayed the Allies greatly.

In a protracted retreat the officer commanding a rear-guard has a most responsible duty to discharge. The safety of the main body whose march he is covering rests largely upon him. He has to select rapidly the most suitable positions, not easy either to attack or to turn; then to so dispose his men upon them as to conceal his own strength, and retard the pursuit; then to hold them just long enough for his purpose, and withdraw just soon enough to avoid being cut off; and to carry all this out as a rule under very trying circumstances, for men in a long retreat—and especially if closely pressed and suffering from hunger and fatigue—have a tendency to lose heart and energy, and sometimes discipline.

Speaking of this retreat of Massena, the author of the life of Picton\* says: “Retreat is ever a trying moment for a commander-in-chief; the movement is disliked by all, and opinions are hardly ever wanting to prove that it was produced by bad management, and that at any one stage it might have been stopped . . . thus Massena was accused by his whole staff of want of skill, while each in his turn accused the others of giving him bad advice.”

\* *Memoirs of Lieut.-Gen. Sir Thomas Picton*, by H. B. Robinson, 1836, vol. i. p. 404.

Under no circumstances of war does a leader require the loyal and energetic support of all officers, and indeed of all ranks, more than when retiring pressed by the enemy; and no position calls for a strong, experienced, and active soldier more than that of the command of a rear-guard at such a time.

Ney proved here, as afterwards in Russia, that his qualifications fitted him, in an exceptional degree, for such a command.

When Massena, after arriving at Guarda on March 21st, 1811, resolved to retire by Sabugal and Pena Macor to the valley of the Tagus, he seems to have chosen the most honourable and best course left open to him. Could he have executed this plan, not only would he have avoided the appearance of a complete retreat, but might, by joining with Joseph and Soult, have threatened Wellington with a serious advance by the valley of the Tagus, which would almost certainly have drawn him away at once from Almeida and Ciudad-Rodrigo. Ney's open resistance at this moment prevented the plan from being carried out, and makes Massena's action in depriving him of his command very intelligible.

With respect to Wellington's operations in the campaign Napier speaks of "the nicety, the quickness, the prudence, and the audacity" \* which marked them, and it may be said that all these qualities, the combination of which in any one

\* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War* (Ed. 1834), vol. iv. p. 365.

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individual is so very rare, were conspicuously manifested.

It has been held by some writers upon this campaign that he should have attacked Massena directly the latter began to fall back from the lines ; not have suffered him to have gained four days' start in the retreat ; and have pressed him generally with greater rapidity and vigour.

The answer to this criticism (one made with a knowledge of Massena's exact intentions, which Wellington did not possess) is this. Wellington's object was to hold Portugal and drive the French out of it, but in doing so to lose as few men as possible, and risk no repulse which might strengthen the hands of the party in England opposed to a continuance of the war.

The French in their disastrous retreat were themselves carrying out his main object for him ; and the following words in which, at the time, he explained his reason for abstaining from pressing Massena more closely at Miranda (which would probably have resulted in the capture of the French artillery and baggage), show his general policy clearly :—

“ I have now an opportunity to inflict a severe loss on the enemy, but not without losing many of my own troops ; I prefer therefore to harass them, and send them out of the country as a rabble—when from want of organization, and from sickness, they will not be able to act for many months ; and keep my own army entire, rather than to weaken myself by fighting them, and probably be so crippled as not to have the ascendant over the

fresh troops on the frontiers. *Almeida and Badajoz are to be retaken.*" \*

It is to be observed, also, that until the French in their retreat were well clear of Leirya it was doubtful whether Massena's design was certainly to retire; and not possibly a mere blind to draw the Allies out after him towards Thomar, while from Leirya he moved rapidly down to the west of the Sierra Baragueda, and attacked the lines in that direction.†

The refusal of Wellington to commit himself incautiously to the attack during the pursuit of Massena, his waiting before Pombal for reinforcements, the precision and ease with which he handled his troops, and the foresight he showed in forestalling the French at Coimbra, are all proofs of that "prudence, nicety, and quickness" to which Napier alludes (see page 170).

Later on, in the second period of this campaign and in the operations of 1812, while these qualities are further illustrated, we shall see many instances of the "audacity" and resolution with which, for a sufficient object, he undertook hazardous enterprises, or boldly faced superior numbers of the enemy.

In this first period of the campaign of 1811, he "had saved Coimbra, forced the enemy into a narrow, intricate, and ravaged country, and with an inferior force turned him out of every strong

\* We have placed the last sentence in italics, as it should be especially noted. It shows how Wellington was already looking forward to the offensive efforts for which he was husbanding his troops.

† *Journals and Sieges in Spain, 1811-2*, by Lieut.-Col. John T. Jones, R.E., 1814, p. 14.

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position, and this by a series of movements based on the soundest principles of war." \*

Massena had commenced the campaign of 1810 with the intention of driving the Allies out of Portugal. At the conclusion of his retreat he himself had been driven out, after his army had lost 30,000 men and endured the extreme of misery.

This forms the best testimony to the strategical skill of Wellington. It was not a triumph won by hard fighting merely, but by the plans of the Commander-in-Chief.

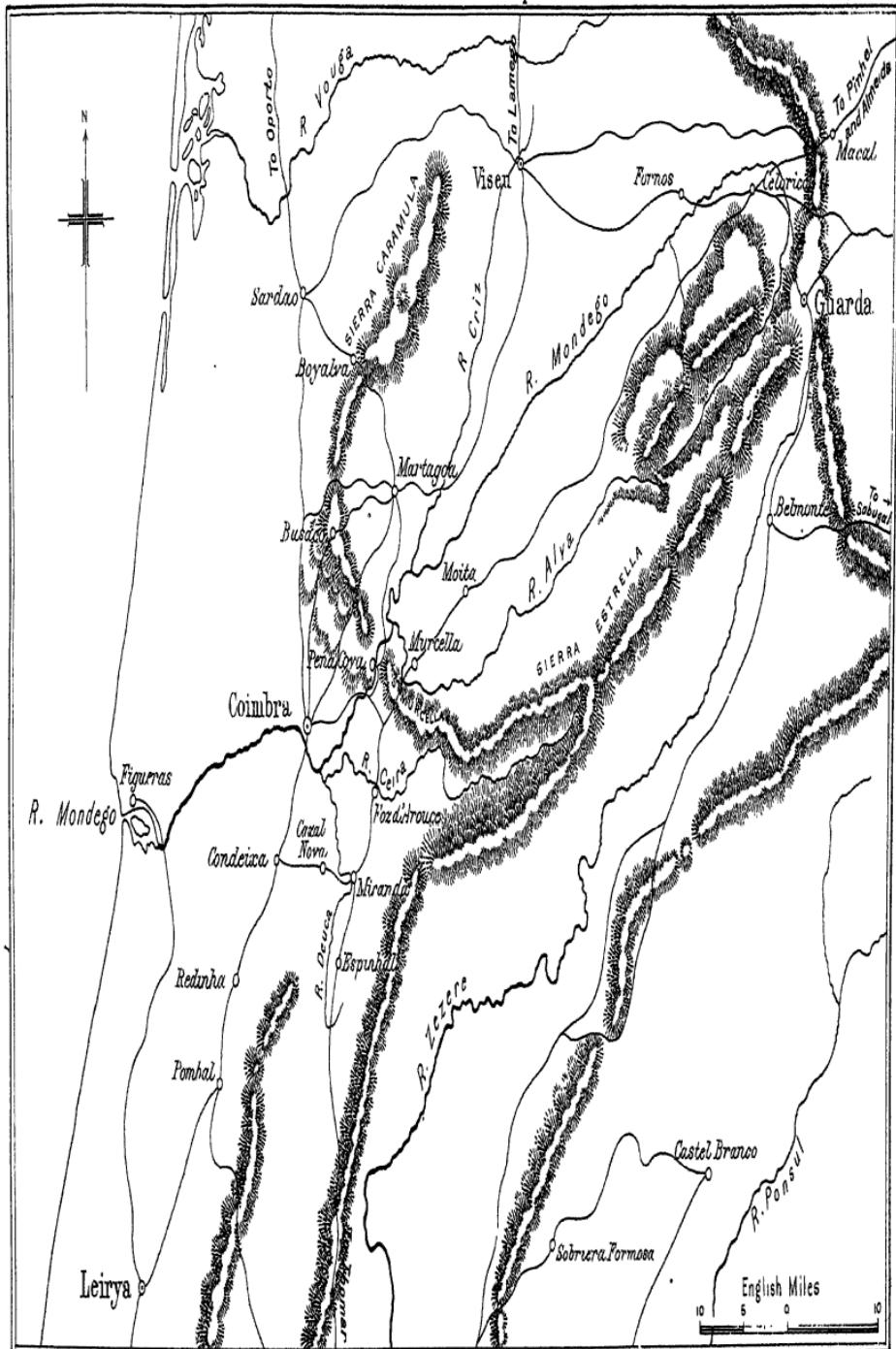
\* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War*, vol. iii. pp. 473-4.





PORtUGAL, Part of Northern portion.

MAP IV.





## CHAPTER IX

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### CAMPAIGN OF 1811

(SECOND PERIOD)

BLOCKADE OF ALMEIDA, FUENTES D'ONOR—BERESFORD'S OPERATIONS, ALBUHERA—ENGAGEMENTS WITH MARMONT, EL BODON AND ALDEA DE PONTE—HILL'S OPERATIONS, ARROYO DOS MOLINOS—DEFENCE OF TARIFA

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MASSENA having been driven out of Portugal, Wellington at once assumed the offensive; and, cantoning his troops on both banks of the Coa, invested Almeida (April 9th, 1811).

Then, leaving the army for a time under the command of General Spencer, he set off towards Badajoz to confer with Marshal Beresford, who, as we have mentioned, had left for Badajoz after the action of Foz d'Arouce on March 15th, 1811, to endeavour to recapture that fortress.

On reaching him Wellington found that he was just on the point of investing Badajoz, having been delayed a good deal on his march by having to bridge the Guadiana, reduce one or two small posts, and fight an action with the French under Mortier.

He reconnoitred the fortress with him on

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April and April 22nd, 1811 ; but after that, having heard  
May,  
1811 that Massena was advancing again with the object  
of relieving Almeida, returned northward immedi-  
ately in order to oppose him. He arrived just  
in time to do so, for Massena, aware of his de-  
parture for the south, had collected all his available  
troops at Salamanca, and was making a great effort  
to succour Almeida by introducing into it a convoy  
of supplies.

Crossing the Portuguese frontier on May 2nd,  
he attacked Wellington, who had taken up a  
position blockading Almeida, and close to the  
village of Fuentes d'Onor.

### COMBAT AND BATTLE OF FUENTES D'ONOR

*May 3rd and 5th, 1811*

(See plan facing page 185)

Wellington's position extended for over five miles along a broad, elevated plateau or tableland, having in its front the River Dos Casas, and behind it the Rivers Turones and Coa. The right occupied at first the village of Fuentes d'Onor, where the plateau sank into an almost level plain in the direction of Nava d'Aver, and the left was at Fort Conception, on the road from Ciudad-Rodrigo to Almeida. The Allies numbered about 33,000 with 42 guns ; the French about 45,000 with 30 guns.

On the afternoon of May 3rd General Loison—for Massena himself had not yet come up—endeavoured to occupy Fuentes d'Onor, while threatening the rest of the position—the plateau being comparatively accessible close to that village ; but

## BATTLE OF FUENTES D'ONOR 176

he was repulsed in the combat which ensued, after <sup>May 5,</sup> 1811, some hard fighting.

On the 4th, Massena, having arrived, massed his troops to his left with the intention of making a more determined attack against the Allied right upon the following day; and Wellington, to meet it, extended his right considerably beyond Fuentes d'Onor, past Poco Velha to Nava d'Aver, across the level, but broken, plain. He also posted some Spaniards on a height above Nava d'Aver, which commanded the country adjacent, and the road from Ciudad-Rodrigo to Sabugal. His 33,000 men were now extended over several miles of front, in addition to having to find a retaining force immediately round the fortress of Almeida.

On the morning of the 5th Massena commenced the battle of Fuentes d'Onor by a fierce attack against the Allied right, endeavouring also to turn it. During the battle the convoy which he desired to introduce into Almeida remained at Gallegos.

While a severe contest went on in the village of Fuentes d'Onor, which was at one time partially carried, the right was very hard pressed, and the Spaniards retired from Nava d'Aver. Wellington, fearing that Massena's numbers would enable him to turn his position, resolved to abandon the road to Sabugal, draw back his right, retiring across the broken plain in presence of the French till he reached the higher tableland, and there form it up between the Dos Casas and the Turones (in a line from Fuentes d'Onor towards Frenada), at right angles to the rest of the position. This

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second position would still cover, though less directly, the roads, through Frenada, to Castello Bom and Almeida.

It was a change of front difficult to effect under the fire of a superior force. The Allied right, covered by the Light Division in squares, had to retire—a portion of them for some miles—over the plain, harassed throughout by the French cavalry; but the movement was carried out with success. Massena, after a heavy cannonade and half-hearted attempt against Wellington's new position, deemed it too difficult to attack, and having remained on his ground during May 6th, 7th, and 8th, withdrew, baffled, to Salamanca. During May 5th there had been desperate fighting also at Fuentes d'Onor, where there were some brilliant bayonet charges; but the village, though partially, was never entirely carried by the French.

Almeida was now left by Massena to its fate, and it fell to Wellington on May 10th, 1811, the greater part of the garrison having managed to escape, after blowing up a portion of the works and destroying the guns.

The loss of the Allies in the battle of Fuentes d'Onor was about 1,500; that of the French between 3,000 and 4,000. In the village of Fuentes d'Onor it was specially heavy.

“Fuentes d'Onor,” as a bar to the I<sup>Peninsular</sup> medal, and a battle-honour for regiments engaged, commemorates the day.

This battle is chiefly remarkable for the manner in which Wellington drew back his right, changing

the front of that portion of his line in the face of the enemy, and the bravery, discipline, and mobility with which his regiments carried out this movement, the infantry retiring in squares for miles, surrounded by 5,000 French cavalry, and protecting the baggage and camp-followers of the army; had the squares been broken the retirement must almost certainly have ended in confusion, and then perhaps in the defeat of the Allies. Napier, alluding to this, says, "There was not, during the war, a more dangerous hour for England."

A noteworthy occurrence also was the extraordinary feat of arms of Captain Norman Ramsay, of the Royal Horse Artillery, who, finding himself cut off\* by the rapid advance of the French horse on the Allied right, without hesitation charged their cavalry with his guns, successfully cutting his way through. This exploit, so unparalleled in its nature, for probably never before or since in any battle has a mass of cavalry been charged by guns, made Norman Ramsay's name famous in the Peninsular army as that of a dauntless, intrepid officer. The incident has been more than once depicted on canvas, and Napier's well-known description of it † will bear repeating:—

"A great commotion was observed among the French squadrons; men and officers closed in confusion towards one point, where loud cries and the sparkling of blades and flashing of pistols indicated some extraordinary occurrence. Suddenly the

\* Some accounts state that a portion of the battery only was cut off. Captain Ramsay was subsequently killed at Waterloo.

† Napier's *Peninsular War*, 1834, vol. iii. p. 513.

multitude was violently agitated, an English shout arose, and Norman Ramsay burst forth at the head of his battery, his horses breathing fire, and stretching like greyhounds along the plain, his guns bounding like things of no weight, and the mounted gunners in close and compact order protecting the rear."

What is to be chiefly noted in this daring action is not its success, for the fall or death of a few artillery horses would have marred that; but the heroic spirit evinced by Ramsay and his gunners, and their stern resolution that neither they nor their guns should pass into the hands of the enemy.

We dwell longer than we otherwise should have done upon the battle of Fuentes d'Onor, because Wellington has been criticised for fighting it in the position he did; and also because it has been spoken of by some as almost a reverse, upon the ground that the Allies fell back from their original to a second position, and that Wellington did not attack or pursue Massena after the battle. It has been argued that for Wellington to have fought with the Rivers Turones and Coa in his rear, in an extended position for his force, and with his right not very strongly supported, was to court danger unnecessarily.

The answer is that Almeida was on the *right* bank of the Coa. Wellington attached great importance, for reasons fully given in the next chapter, to the reduction of this fortress, and of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz (Elvas was in his hands), situated as they were on the roads connecting

Spain with Portugal. He could only effectually blockade Almeida from the right bank of the Coa ; and to have abandoned the tableland between the Turones and Dos Casas to the enemy would have been unwise. He was obliged to push his left to Fort Conception to bar the road leading to Almeida from Ciudad-Rodrigo ; and to have withdrawn the troops from thence during the battle to the right would have uncovered that road.

When Massena's intention to force the Allied right if possible became clearly evident, he met it by placing the Spaniards on the hill of Nava d'Aver—a commanding position—connecting them across the plain with the tableland by British troops. Had he not done this he must have left open the road past his right by Nava d'Aver to Seceiras (over the Coa) and to Sabugal, on his line of communication with Hill. This he did not desire to do unless compelled to, which in the battle he was, because Nava d'Aver was evacuated. Then he successfully took up the second position, which he permanently held, and which Massena (realising, no doubt by the manner in which this movement was carried out, the sort of enemy he had to deal with) did not attack.

Massena, therefore, failed in the purpose of his advance, while Wellington gained the object for which he had made his determined stand, though in the battle he had no doubt some anxious moments. As to the loss sustained, that of the Allies was severe, but that of the French far more so.

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In his despatch to Lord Liverpool on May 8th, 1811, Wellington explains why he did not attack the French after the battle and before their retreat, in these words : “The result of a general action brought on by an attack upon the enemy by us might, under the circumstances” (the superior strength of the French, especially in cavalry) “have been doubtful ; and if the enemy had chosen to avoid it, or if they had met it, they would have taken advantage of the collection of our troops to fight this action, and thrown relief into Almeida.” In other words, the main end for which Massena had fought (and lost) the battle of May 5th might in this way have been gained by him ; and so Wellington would not attack unnecessarily.

Wellington’s own remarks \* upon the battle are very interesting, as showing the frank spirit in which he could meet an unfavourable opinion of what he had himself accomplished. He writes : “Lord Liverpool was quite right not to move thanks for the battle of Fuentes, though it was the most difficult I was ever concerned in and against the greatest odds. We had very nearly three to one against us engaged † ; about four to one of cavalry, and moreover our cavalry had not a gallop in them, while some of that of the enemy was fresh and in excellent order. If Bony had been there, we should have been beaten.”

But with regard to this last sentence Wellington was before the battle perfectly aware that Bonaparte would not be there, and this leads us to

\* *Supplementary Despatches of Wellington.*

† Meaning where the brunt of the fighting occurred.

## FUENTES D'ONOR—COMMENTS ON 182

touch upon what is occasionally met with in criticisms of the Peninsular campaigns—viz. that had Wellington been contending with the French Emperor and not with his marshals, certain operations in which he was successful would most probably have failed. This has the appearance, at all events, of implying that he did not evince in them a military capacity sufficient to cope with the genius of Napoleon.

Now, as his writings and actions show, no one ever rated Napoleon's presence with the French Army higher than Wellington did; (he estimated it as equal, in a sense,\* to 40,000 men), or, it may be added, understood Napoleon's character better—but perhaps the very best proof of Wellington's commanding talents for practical affairs was that he dealt with men and circumstances as they existed, and not as they might have been. He formed his estimate of what Soult or Massena or Marmont would or could attempt from his discernment of their personal tendencies, characteristics, and difficulties, and in forming this estimate his judgment was very seldom wrong. It was because he opposed them with this clear insight into facts, and not as he might, or would, have opposed Napoleon had he been there, that he gained with his small army the victories which he did in Portugal and Spain.

\* Not meaning that his presence at any period of a battle would have been equal to a reinforcement of 40,000 troops, but that it put an end largely to the jealousies of the marshals; that he was the Sovereign, the fountain-head of rewards and honours; and that all the resources of France, civil, political, and military, were turned towards the seat of his operations.—*Reminiscences of the Duke of Wellington*, by the Rev. G. R. Gleig, pp. 312-3.

But it is true that the attempt of Napoleon to command his armies in the Peninsula from a distance played greatly into his hands ; and it is interesting to give in this connection Wellington's remarks on the subject of the Corps organization of the French Army, and the way in which Napoleon's absence affected the troops \* :—

“ Each of the officers commanding these Corps d'Armée exercised over the movements of his own corps a command independent of all except of Napoleon himself. Not only they declined to obey each other, but would not attend to suggestions or advice in respect to the operations of their several corps in critical moments ; and from the great caution with which it appears that Napoleon proceeded in placing one of these authorities in command over others, and the paucity of the instances in which he adopted such a measure, it may almost be believed that he was apprehensive of a refusal to obey the order. This organization of Corps d'Armée gave great efficiency to a French army when under Napoleon, and was very convenient in all great movements and operations ; but it rendered it necessary for Napoleon himself to be present on all occasions in which it was necessary to employ more than one Corps d'Armée in an operation.”

It may be added to this that in the same French corps there was often friction between divisions and

\* *Memorandum on the War in Russia in 1812*, by the Duke of Wellington. This is given in the appendix to *Personal Reminiscences of the Duke of Wellington*, by the Rev. G. R. Gleig, 1904. Though written on the war in Russia, it applies equally to the Peninsular War.

brigades. In the battle of Fuentes d'Onor, Napier writes that there was much discord in Massena's army ; that Massena himself was disgusted, as he knew that he was about to be superseded by Marmont ; that "the Imperial Guards" (under Bessières) "would not charge at his order ; Junot did not second him cordially, Loison neglected his instructions, Drouet sought to spare his own divisions in the fight, and Reynier remained perfectly inactive. Thus the machinery of battle, being shaken, would not work."

Under these circumstances Wellington's decision to give battle to Massena against heavy odds rather than allow Almeida to be relieved appears clearly vindicated. He was well aware of the general state of Massena's army, which he had driven out of Portugal ; he could trust to his own troops, and the event justified his judgment.

It would have been no mark of military genius to have abandoned Almeida, and fallen back before Massena, as if the latter had been Napoleon at the head of an undefeated and united army.

Wellington does not in his despatch blame the Spaniards for retiring from Nava d'Aver, while the French were pressing back the Allied right ; therefore it must be inferred that they were justified in this ; but Napier writes that as the French cavalry commenced to form up in order of battle before the height, "Julian Sanchez" (commanding the Spaniards) "immediately retired across the Turones, partly in fear, but more in anger at the death of his lieutenant, who, having

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May,  
1811

foolishly ridden close up to the enemy, making many violent gestures, was mistaken for a French officer, and shot by a soldier of the Guards\* before the action commenced." This was one of those regrettable incidents which may have had greater influence upon the battle than it should. But the abandonment of this height, whatever the cause of it may have been, compromised the safety of Wellington's right, and necessitated his drawing it back.

Fuentes d'Onor was a decided victory, but it is not impossible that the experience of this day may have had some effect in determining Wellington, later on (as we shall see), not to go beyond the Agueda—as he had in this instance beyond the Coa—when he blockaded Ciudad-Rodrigo, and faced Marmont at Fuente Guinaldo.

### BERESFORD'S OPERATIONS

We must now turn to the operations of Beresford, who during Wellington's engagements with Massena near Almeida had been obliged to fight a serious battle with Soult near Badajoz.

We have before said that Wellington, after reconnoitring Badajoz with him on April 22nd, 1811, set off to return to Almeida.

Shortly afterwards Soult came forward to relieve Badajoz, and Beresford, in order to give him battle to greater advantage, was obliged to discontinue the siege, and take up a position behind the River Albuhera.

\* Meaning the English Guards.

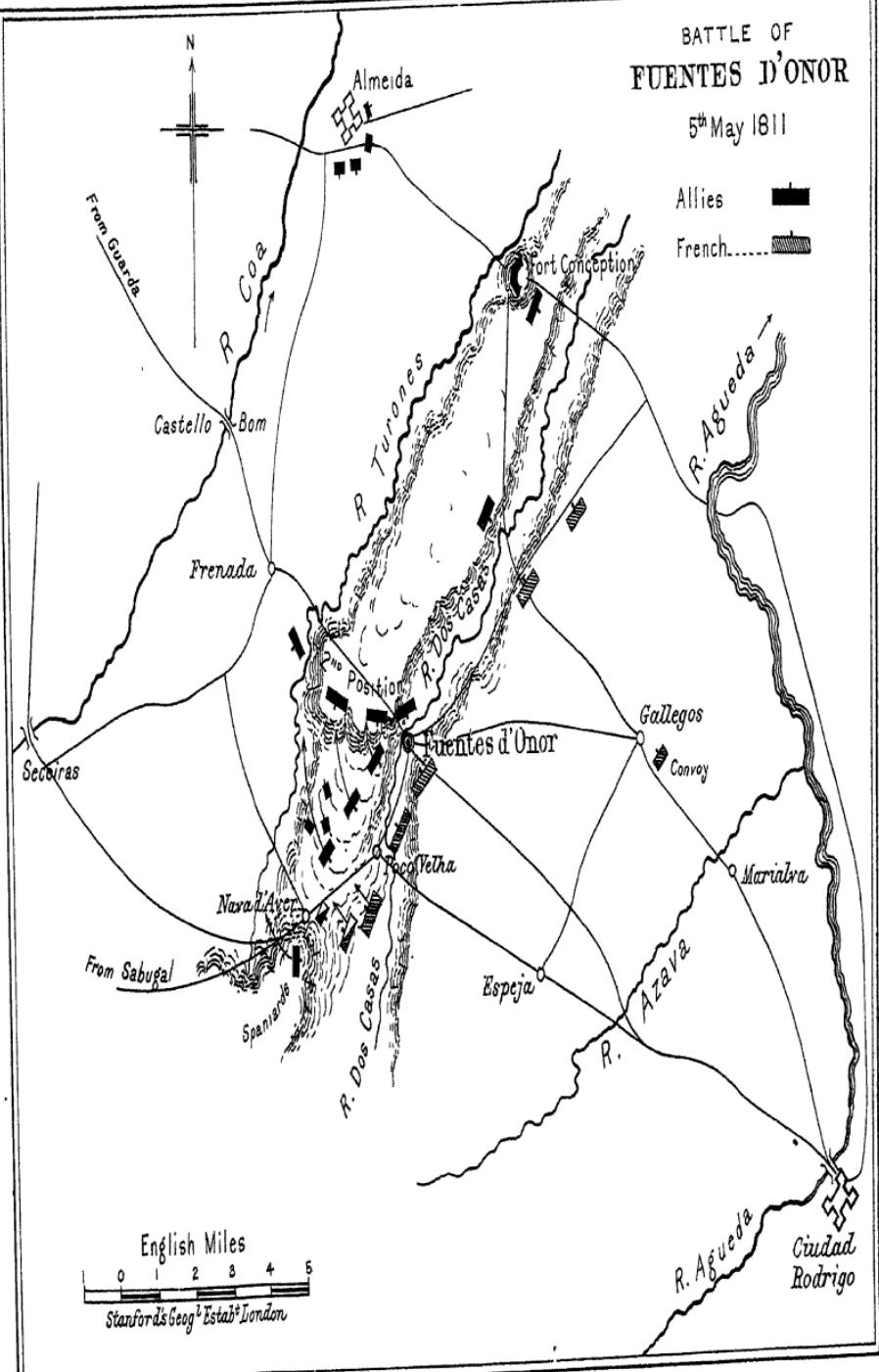




BATTLE OF  
FUENTES D'ONOR

5<sup>th</sup> May 1811

Allies      ━━  
French..... ━━━



English Miles  
0 1 2 3 4 5  
Stanford's Geog. Estab. London



This siege of Badajoz which the approach of May 16, Soult interrupted is called the *First English Siege*<sup>1811</sup> of *Badajoz*.

Soult now attacked Beresford in his position, bringing on the

## BATTLE OF ALBUHERA

May 16th, 1811

(See plan facing page 191)

This was one of the most—if not the most—close and desperate battles of the Peninsular War. It forms, with Corunna and Barrosa, the three at which Wellington himself was not present, but for which bars to the Peninsular medal were awarded.

The Allies—a mixed force of British, Portuguese, and Spaniards, under Beresford—numbered about 30,000, of whom 7,000 were British, with 38 guns. The French were about 23,000, but they were veteran troops, slightly superior in cavalry, and had 50 guns.

The Allied position ran along the heights north of the Albuhera River, which rise up from the stream in gentle swells and easy slopes—the right being very slightly thrown back. The British and Portuguese formed the centre and left, across the high roads from Albuhera to Badajoz and Valverde, Alten's brigade holding the village and bridge of Albuhera. The Spaniards were upon the right, but some commanding ground to their right front was not strongly occupied.

The French on the south of the Albuhera were

## 187 CAMPAIGN OF 1811 (2ND PERIOD)

May 16, 1811 able in a great measure to conceal their dispositions and movements, under cover of very wooded ground.

Soult, observing that if he could force the Spaniards from their position, and secure the high ground to their right front, he could dominate and rake the rest of the Allied line, determined to make his main attack in that direction, while at the same time he assaulted the village of Albuhera. The latter was successfully held ; but the Spaniards, on the right of the Allied line, must have changed their position more to the right under fire, in order to meet adequately the formidable French attack. This they either could not or did not do, and were driven back. The British from the centre, who then came up to recover the lost ground, met at first with a very serious check. The morning was misty and wet, and the French cavalry coming unexpectedly in the foggy weather upon some British regiments in the act of deploying, inflicted heavy loss upon them, taking 6 guns.\* Confusion ensued ; the battle appeared lost, and Beresford made preparations to retreat.

This was the crisis of the battle ; and fortunately at this turning point a gallant advance of Sir Lowry Cole's division restored the fortune of the day, the French being in their turn after a desperate struggle forced back, finally, from the field. "Nothing," says Napier, writing of this advance, "could stop that astonishing infantry † . . . their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front, their measured tread shook

\* Five of these were subsequently recovered.

† The 7th and 23rd Regiments of the Fusilier Brigade (Royal and Royal Welsh Fusiliers) here specially distinguished themselves.

the ground, their dreadful volleys swept away May 16, the head of every formation . . . and the mighty <sup>1811</sup> mass" (of the French), "at length giving way like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the ascent."

Thus victory was, in the very moment of their triumph, snatched from the French by the hard fighting of the British infantry. Soult now retreated to the shelter of the woods, and thence towards Seville, the result of the battle being that he had failed to relieve Badajoz, which was left to its fate.

The losses on both sides were very heavy, though the battle had only lasted four hours. They were on the part of the Allies about 7,000, and of the French 8,000, the British alone having lost over one-half of their strength.

This battle, which was one of hard and down-right fighting more than of skilful tactics, is commemorated by "Albuhera" as a bar to the Peninsular medal, and on the colours and appointments of regiments engaged.

The success of Soult, before the advance of Cole's division had restored the day, is generally attributed to the fact that, the attack having been expected more towards the centre and left, covering the road to Badajoz, the French effort to roll up the right had not been foreseen.

The commanding ground in advance of the Spanish right was not, therefore, very judiciously occupied, and no entrenchments were thrown up on the right. In explanation of this, to some

extent, it is to be said that the succession of knolls on the right, rising one after the other, made it very difficult to shut out all favourable heights from the enemy.

The Spaniards, by all accounts, fought very gallantly on this day ; but Wellington (who was not present in the battle) writes thus from Elvas, after visiting the field, to Lieutenant-General Sir B. Spencer : “*May 22nd, 1811.—I went yesterday to Albuhera, and saw the field of battle. We had a very good position; and I think should have gained a complete victory in it, without any material loss, if the Spaniards could have manœuvred ; but unfortunately they cannot.*” And he writes also on May 20th to C. Stuart, Esq. : “*The Spaniards, by all accounts, behaved remarkably well, but they were immovable.*”

Apparently, then, it was Wellington’s opinion that had well-trained and mobile troops, confident in themselves and able to manœuvre and take up a new position in presence of the enemy, held the right, they would have foiled Soult’s attack ; and one lesson taught by this battle, and that of Fuentes d’Onor, seems to be the great importance of troops being mobile and quick, as well as steady and brave. Had Wellington’s divisions at Fuentes d’Onor, or, as we shall see later on, at the combat of El Bodon, been unequal to manœuvring coolly and together under the enemy’s fire, disaster would almost certainly have ensued.

The dull, misty weather also favoured Soult’s attack.

Sir Harry Smith makes a remark in connection

with this battle which is valuable and suggestive. He writes \* that Sir William Stewart, commanding a brigade coming up at the critical moment when the British were being pressed back by the French, and having been accustomed himself to the drill of the 95th Rifles under Sir John Moore, gave in the heat of battle an order to a regiment advancing in column to deploy to the right into line on the leading company, which was the grenadier company.

This command was not understood, as it would have brought this company (the grenadier) on the left of the line, instead of the right, its usual place; disorder resulted, and consequent loss, which might have ended in disaster.

To understand this it must be explained that, at the time of the Peninsular War, and, indeed, until comparatively recently, the drill of the British infantry was less elastic than it has now become under the changes which breech-loading and magazine weapons have made imperative. Companies always expected to keep their special places in line, the grenadier company being on the right. Therefore, in deploying from column (that company leading), deployment should have been to the left.

But drill, under Sir John Moore's system, approximated more to that of our present infantry; deployments were made to either flank of any company as might be most convenient; and companies were habituated to occupy any place indifferently in line or column.

\* *Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith*, by G. C. Moore-Smith.

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May,  
1811

If Sir Harry Smith is correct in what he writes, the lessons suggested would appear to be these :—

That one cannot exaggerate the importance of what is taught in the training of troops during peace, because in accordance with that teaching will men of all ranks naturally act upon emergency in the heat of battle ; and also that there are great advantages in the system of drill being simple, quick, and elastic.

That this need not involve a sacrifice of steadiness was illustrated at Fuentes d'Onor, in the long retirement of the Light Division in squares, unbroken, amidst the French cavalry, “ trampling, bounding, shouting, and impatient to charge.” \*

To revert now to the main operations under Wellington.

The great reputation with which Massena, after his career of victory elsewhere, had entered upon the campaign of 1810 against Wellington, had been sensibly lowered by his failure to force the lines of Torres Vedras and his subsequent disastrous retreat from Portugal, so that, after the battle of Fuentes d'Onor and the fall of Almeida, he was, by Napoleon's order, replaced in his command by Marshal Marmont.

Wellington, having made Almeida safe, now set off southward again to Beresford, arriving after the battle of Albuhera had been fought by the latter, and in person resumed the siege of Badajoz (this siege being called the *Second English Siege of Badajoz*).

\* *Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, by Sir W. Napier, 1852.









Two assaults of this fortress, however, failed ; May to Marmont, marching southward from Salamanca <sup>August, 1811</sup>, across the Tagus, joined Soult ; and in the end, upon the approach of the French in large numbers, Wellington was compelled to retire, and withdrew in June, 1811, towards Elvas, where he was joined by Spencer from the north.

He now prepared to oppose the entry of the combined forces of Marmont and Soult into Portugal by the road from Badajoz ; but the French marshals had begun to find great difficulty in provisioning their armies—a point which we shall dwell on more particularly hereafter—and realising the serious opposition they would probably meet with, made no further attempt to cross the Portuguese boundary, but after a few weeks separated. Soult marched to Seville, and Marmont to Salamanca ; whence, leaving only a small garrison in that town, he afterwards moved to the valley of the Tagus, occupying and strengthening the pass of Baños, and keeping up a communication with the French on the south bank of the river by the boat-bridge of Almaraz, which was defended by a strong tête-de-pont.

Wellington now, proceeding northwards once more, cantoned his army on both banks of the Agueda (August 10th, 1811), the main body being on the left bank, and commenced the blockade—not siege—of Ciudad-Rodrigo, hoping to force it to surrender from want of provisions, or at least to draw the French away from other parts of Spain to its succour.

His headquarters were at Fuente Guinaldo, and

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Aug. to  
Sept  
1811

a corps under Hill, 14,000 strong, was posted, as in the previous year, in the Alemtejo to guard that province and Lisbon, and watch Elvas, a portion of this corps being now brought to the north of the Tagus near Castel-Branco.

Some very interesting movements now took place, both in the neighbourhood of Ciudad-Rodrigo and under Hill in the vicinity of the Tagus, which, though subsidiary to the greater operations of the campaign, were connected with them.

Their general design will be sufficiently understood by a reference to Map I.; but before we describe them we may say that the autumn of 1811 formed an important turning-point in the Peninsular struggle, and will review briefly the situation in Spain.

Much hung at this period upon the extent to which Napoleon himself would put forth his full strength and personal energy towards the expulsion of the Allies from the Peninsula.

France was, for the moment, at peace with the great Continental powers, and there was every indication that all his efforts were about to be turned seriously against the Allies in Spain. His invasion of Russia had not yet been irrevocably taken in hand; between July 19th and the end of September, 1811, reinforcements of over 50,000 men\* had entered Spain from

\* *Account of the War in Spain, Portugal, and the South of France*, by Lieut.-Col. John Jones, R.E., 2nd edition, 1821, vol. ii. p. 21.

France, and it was considered most probable that Aug. to  
Napoleon himself would soon follow with a large Sept.  
host. 1811

General Hill writes at this time (October 1st, 1811) to his brother : " Next spring will probably decide the campaign for England or France in favour of the reinforcements which may arrive to either army.\*

Under these circumstances, Wellington, while actively employed in the operations against the enemy in his immediate front, had taken steps to further perfect the lines of Torres Vedras, and strengthen the defences of Lisbon ; so that, should he be compelled to retreat again within the lines, Napoleon should find the task of driving him out of Portugal to be even more difficult of accomplishment than Massena had found it.

Napier considers that the utmost efforts his great antagonist could have put forth would have been foiled by Wellington, had the Portuguese duly supported him ; but the issue was never tried, for the French Emperor, instead of leading his armies in person in the Peninsula, put himself at the head of those with which he commenced his disastrous campaign against Russia.

Wellington also made preparations, which we shall mention in the next chapter, for offensive operations in Spain, should he have an opportunity to undertake them in the following year, getting together a battering train at Lisbon, for the future reception and security of which the works of Almeida were afterwards strengthened, and

\* *Life of Lord Hill*, by the Rev. Edwin Sidney, 1845.

Sept.  
1811

improving the navigation of the Tagus and the Douro.

It had been the hope of Marmont, who was now in the valley of the Tagus, that as he had left but a small garrison at Salamanca, Wellington would be induced to advance by that city into Spain, which would afford the French an opportunity of falling upon his communications with Portugal and relieving Ciudad-Rodrigo.

But Wellington was not to be tempted forward ; nor even to place himself with his main force in such a position near Ciudad-Rodrigo (which is on the right bank of the Agueda, a river subject to sudden rises) as might oblige him to fight a battle on that bank with the river in his rear.

He contented himself with maintaining with the Spaniards a blockade from his position on the left bank, whence he could throw out his posts so as to interfere with supplies or succour reaching the fortress, except under convoy of a large force.\*

His headquarters being at Fuente Guinaldo, which he entrenched, he watched the Perales Pass and the road from Pena Macor to observe and check Marmont, while with the rest of his army he carried on the blockade. His total force, much scattered, was about 40,000.

Ciudad-Rodrigo, after six weeks, began to be in difficulties for want of supplies, so Marmont, having failed to draw Wellington away from the fortress,

\* It has been before noticed (p. 179) that at the blockade of Almeida on the right bank of the Coa he crossed to the right bank to maintain the blockade.

was at last compelled to advance to its relief or allow it to fall into the hands of the Allies. 1811

He therefore concerted with General Dorsenne in the north, who with a French corps, including the Imperial Guards, was threatening Galicia, to make a combined movement with him against Wellington, in order to throw a convoy of provisions into Ciudad-Rodrigo. While Dorsenne moved southwards with a convoy by Salamanca, he himself marched over the pass of Baños, north of Plasencia, with another convoy, and joined him on September 21st, 1811, on a large plain a few miles to the north-east of Ciudad-Rodrigo.

Their united forces, amounting to nearly 60,000 men, of whom 6,000 were cavalry, with 100 guns, protected an immense convoy of mules, waggons, sheep, and oxen, several miles in length. In support of this movement French forces also advanced on the north and south of the Tagus as a diversion, Girard to Merida near Badajoz, and others to Truxillo and Plasencia.

Wellington now concentrated his forces closer to Ciudad-Rodrigo, the greater part of them being on heights on the left bank of the Agueda, but still watching its course above and below the fortress, and also the pass of Perales. His centre was near El Bodon, and the Light Division was thrown across the river to the right bank, south of Ciudad-Rodrigo, with directions to cross the river and fall back on Fuente Guinaldo if attacked in force.

On September 23rd and 24th Marmont moved

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Sept.  
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1811

forward, and placing some troops to observe the Allies, introduced the convoy, meeting in this with no opposition from Wellington, who considered that it would not be judicious to incur, in order to prevent this, the risk, and possibly heavy loss, which a battle on the right of the Agueda, and against such superior forces, would involve.

### COMBATS OF EL BODON AND ALDEA DE PONTE

*September 25th and 27th, 1811*

On the 25th, Marmont, instead of falling back after relieving the fortress, as he had originally (it is said) intended, determined to cross the Agueda and ascertain the position and strength of the Allies. A large force under Montbrun, with a powerful body of cavalry, passed the river close to the south of Ciudad-Rodrigo, turned the El Bodon heights, cutting off temporarily two regiments to the north of El Bodon, and pressed the Allies back towards Fuente Guinaldo.

Wellington's position at El Bodon was far from a secure one. Not counting a division detached towards the pass of Perales, the Allies, with only 35,000 men, were extended over some twenty miles of ground, the Light Division being separated from the remainder of the force by the River Agueda; while Marmont (with Dorsenne), numbering some 60,000, was concentrated at Ciudad-Rodrigo within a distance varying from three to eight miles of the positions occupied.

But Marmont was not aware of the advantage which he held, and his attack was made with but

a portion of his force, so that Wellington's confident front and the gallantry of the troops saved them on this occasion, as on several others, from any very serious loss.

In the combat of El Bodon the 5th and 77th Regiments,\* two weak battalions formed in one square, retired for a considerable distance over exposed ground in the face of the whole of Montbrun's cavalry, which failed to break them, and Wellington subsequently took up another position on the ridge of Fuente Guinaldo.

Here he remained for some hours longer than he otherwise would have done, largely because the Light Division had not yet joined him, and he would not leave it isolated beyond the Agueda. Napier states that Craufurd, who was in command of it, always eager to fight and reluctant to retreat, should, having regard to Wellington's position, have fallen back more quickly and directly to Guinaldo ; the result of his slow retirement being that Wellington, with under 15,000 men—his divisions not having yet concentrated—had to face for several hours a very superior force of Marmont's army at Fuente Guinaldo.

Enterprise on Marmont's part would here have enabled him to attack to great advantage ; but, ignorant of the true situation, he delayed for his whole force to assemble. From mid-day of the 25th until midnight of the 26th Wellington remained firm in his position, by which time Marmont (with Dorsenne) had concentrated 60,000 men in his front. But then, his divisions having either joined him or been directed to Aldea de Ponte,

\* Now the Northumberland Fusiliers and 2nd Batt. Middlesex Regt.

Sept.  
25-28,  
1811

he fell back in the night to a good position near that village.

Here on the 27th there was a sharp engagement, and Aldea de Ponte itself was twice lost and twice retaken by the Allies ; but, Wellington retiring still further to a loop of the Coa, where he could only be attacked upon a narrow front, Marmont, having become short of provisions, declined battle, and on the 28th the French forces separated. Dorsenne returned to Salamanca, and Marmont to the valley of the Tagus, while Wellington went into cantonments on both banks of the Coa, the blockade of Ciudad-Rodrigo being partially kept up by the Spaniards.

There is no doubt that for a time Wellington's position, both at El Bodon and at Fuente Guinaldo, was one of some danger, which probably no one realised as clearly as he did himself.

Marmont, when he afterwards became aware of the weak strength in which his adversary had been facing him in the latter position, and of the situation from which the Light Division had escaped, is said to have exclaimed (alluding to Napoleon's fortune), "And Wellington's star ; it also is bright ! " \*

But it can be readily understood that Wellington would risk much rather than imperil by his own retirement the safe junction with him of the Light Division ; and another reason why he remained so long on the positions taken up, is thus given in his despatch of September 29th, 1811 : "As

\* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War*, 1834, vol. iv. p. 248.

## EL BODON TO FUENTE GUINALDO 200

the reports, as usual, were so various in regard to the enemy's real strength, it was necessary that I should see their army, in order that the people of this country might be convinced that to raise the blockade was a measure of necessity."

Napier, in commenting upon these movements, and although he considers that Wellington had better have fallen back from El Bodon sooner than he did, says of his bold stand at Guinaldo : "The resolution" (*i.e.* to remain until the Light Division was safe) "was one of those daring strokes of genius which the ordinary rules of art were never made to control . . . Lord Wellington's conduct at Guinaldo was above rules."

Wellington in his despatch above referred to (of September 29th, 1811), expresses no disapproval of Craufurd's action, though from various accounts of the war it seems certain that the latter's reluctance to retreat from the right bank of the river had caused him much anxiety.

He speaks in the following strong words of commendation of certain regiments in the affair of El Bodon : "The conduct of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, affords a memorable example of what the steadiness and discipline of the troops, and their confidence in their officers, can effect in the most difficult and trying situations. The conduct of the 77th Regiment, under the command of Colonel Bromhead, was equally good, and I have never seen a more determined attack than was made by the whole of the enemy's cavalry, with every advantage of the assistance

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Oct. 1811 of a superior artillery, and repulsed by these two weak battalions." The conduct of the 1st (German) Hussars and 11th Light Dragoons (now 11th Hussars) was also much praised.

### HILL'S OPERATIONS

#### *Surprise of Arroyo dos Molinos*

Towards the middle of October, 1811, after the affairs near Fuente Guinaldo, a French division under Girard crossed the Guadiana at Merida, and inflicted great annoyance on the northern districts of Estramadura. Hill therefore proposed to Wellington to operate against Girard in conjunction with the Spaniards, which was approved, under certain conditions limiting the extent of the movement.

While on the march, Hill, having discovered that Girard had moved from the position he was understood to be in, and was at Arroyo dos Molinos, west of Truxillo, determined to surprise him there if possible.

By the evening of October 27th, 1811, he reached, in very tempestuous wet weather, a point within four miles of the French, who were entirely unconscious of his vicinity. The villages about Hill were surrounded to prevent warning being given by the inhabitants ; and the troops having remained in the fields all night through a violent hail-storm, and moving off towards morning in complete silence, surprised Arroyo dos Molinos at dawn ; the French pickets having their backs turned to the direction

from which Hill approached in order to escape the violence of the wind and rain.

A force having been previously detached, by a wide circuit, to interpose between the French and Truxillo, the leading brigade burst upon the village, the 71st and 92nd playing, “Hey, Johnny Cope, are ye waking yet?” The enemy made a short resistance; then, panic-stricken, fled in utter confusion to the mountains, throwing down arms and accoutrements, or surrendering themselves prisoners.

General Hill writes thus to his sister: “*PORTALEGRE, November 5th, 1811.*—I have time merely to inform you that on the morning of the 28th at daybreak I succeeded in surprising, attacking, and annihilating the French corps under General Girard at Arroyo dos Molinos. The enemy’s force, when attacked, consisted of about 3,000 infantry, 1,600 cavalry and artillery. The result is the capture of one general (Bron), one colonel (the Prince d’Aremberg), 35 lieutenant-colonels and inferior officers, 1,400 prisoners, and probably 500 killed. The others dispersed, having thrown away their arms; we have also got all the enemy’s artillery, baggage, and magazines—in short, everything that belonged to the corps.” \*

In fact, the surprise was most successful and complete, and for it General Hill was made a Knight of the Bath, becoming Sir Rowland Hill.

“Arroyo dos Molinos,” as a battle-honour, is borne by the 34th (now 1st Battalion, the Border) Regiment.

\* *Life of Lord Hill*, by the Rev. Edwin Sidney, 1845, p. 172.

Dec. 1811

*Defence of Tarifa*

The operations of Hill had also an indirect object as a diversion which might draw off the French from an enterprise they were undertaking in October, 1811, against Tarifa—the southern point of Spain near Gibraltar, which was occupied by the Allies.

This enterprise did not succeed at this time, but it may be here mentioned that it was again renewed in December, 1811, when an assault on Tarifa, which was not a very strong place, was most gallantly repulsed by the Allies (December 31st) with heavy loss to the assailants, who then withdrew.

For this defence “Tarifa” is borne as a battle-honour by the 47th and 87th Regiments (now respectively the 1st Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusileers).\*

The value of Tarifa to the Allies is best shown by the following extract from an intercepted despatch of Soult’s, in which he wrote thus of the importance of the French capturing it.

“The taking of Tarifa will be more hurtful to the English and to the defenders of Cadiz than the taking of Alicante or even Badajoz, where I cannot go without first securing my left, and taking Tarifa.”

In short, the post of Tarifa was an assistance to the Allies in the defence of Cadiz; and the two places together endangered Soult’s left and rear,

\* A portion of the 2nd Battalion 95th Rifles also took part in this defence.

should he move from Seville towards Badajoz. Dec. 1811 Napier ascribes great merit for the plan of its defence to Captain (afterwards Sir Charles) Smith, of the Royal Engineers.

What was done in the closing months of the year 1811 will be more conveniently touched upon in the next chapter, forming as it largely does the preparation for the campaign which was to open in 1812.

But it may be useful to say, at this point, that, before reading fuller detailed histories of the operations of 1811, it will be found an advantage to consider the dates of the various occurrences, and so get the connection of the main events clearly arranged in the mind.

The fighting during certain months of this campaign was so universal, and Wellington appears in person near Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz, places widely distant, at dates so close together, that the accounts may at times seem confusing.

It should be noticed that Wellington, after Massena's retreat, invested Almeida, April 9th; then went south to Beresford, reconnoitred Badajoz with him, and prepared to besiege it, April 22nd (1st English siege); then returned to Almeida and fought Massena at Fuentes d'Onor, May 3rd, and got possession of Almeida, May 10th; then returned to Badajoz to Beresford (who in his absence had raised the siege and fought Soult at Albuhera, May 16th); then resumed the siege of Badajoz, (2nd English siege), but was compelled to retire without taking that fortress (June, 1811).

## COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

The rapid manner with which Wellington, when Massena had been driven out of Portugal, passed at once from the defensive to the offensive is striking. Compared to the numbers which Napoleon (who it was now thought would personally conduct the war in Spain) could bring against him, his army was small, and it may confidently be said that many a leader would have been contented with the success achieved, and concentrated all his energies upon strengthening the defences of Lisbon and Portugal while awaiting events.

Wellington, however, at once moved against Almeida, Ciudad-Rodrigo, and Badajoz, though he failed at this period to take the two latter strongholds.

It has been considered that too much was here attempted, and that it would have been wiser to have concentrated his efforts against Ciudad-Rodrigo alone; and, until after its fall, attempted nothing towards Badajoz, beyond observing it and Soult's corps.

But Wellington had cogent reasons for his action. The reduction of one fortress alone would not have been sufficient for the offensive plans he had in view, for reasons which are fully entered into in discussing the next campaign (of 1812). In addition to this it formed the very essence of his military policy to keep each French Corps\* employed and concentrated in their own provinces, giving them as little opportunity as possible

\* A "Corps," in this sense, means a "Corps d'Armée"—a large body of troops, comprising two or more divisions, and under the command of a marshal or general of very high rank.

either to disperse or to unite with each other. This policy was largely based upon the weakness of the French system of supplying their troops with food, which Wellington very clearly realised. We shall enter into it more fully in the next chapter, so that it is enough to say now that when a French Corps was able to disperse it could live and support itself much more easily than when it was concentrated. Massed together, it found it difficult to procure sufficient food, and the guerilla bands attacked its communications ; but when for any great object two Corps managed to unite, they then constituted a most formidable body of troops, to meet which Wellington was compelled to assemble in force, relinquishing the prosecution of his own plans to frustrate those of the French.

Colonel (afterwards Sir John) Jones, R.E., in his *Journals and Sieges in Spain*, writes : "The enemy during this campaign" (1811) "had a great numerical superiority over the Allies, and he would no doubt have reaped the due advantage therefrom, had not every movement on the part of Lord Wellington been conducted with a happy reference to the difference of the commissariat of the two armies . . . the French have no magazines; they subsist by the daily contributions they levy, and never, therefore, can remain long united in a large body."

Bessierès, also, writes thus to Berthier from Valladolid on June 6th, 1811 : "The Army of the North is composed of 44,000 men, it is true ; but if you draw together 20,000 the communications are instantly lost, and the insurrection makes the greatest progress."

The difficulty of feeding their men when concentrated thus greatly hampered the French leaders; and Wellington's plan of attacking important points, widely separated, at one time, was ably directed to compel the French to concentrate or lose those points, and also to interfere with their various Corps co-operating together. No other policy could have been equally effectual in enabling him to oppose such superior numbers, and it may be added also that by thus giving employment to the French marshals and generals in their own districts, he afforded them very plausible pretexts for not going to each other's aid, which their mutual jealousies made them occasionally disposed to take advantage of. It was a much more far-reaching policy than a merely defensive one.\*

Writing from Frenada, October 2nd, 1811, to the Right Hon. W. W. Pole, as to the affairs near Fuente Guinaldo, Wellington thus explains why he had not been able to assemble a larger force in the north to carry on the blockade of Ciudad-Rodrigo in the summer †: "The reason why I could bring no more than 40,000 men to maintain the blockade was that I am at all times obliged to keep a large corps on the south of the Tagus. The reason of this is that the enemy are at Seville nearer to Lisbon than I am.‡ However, although

\* Wellington always paid great attention to commissariat matters. He used to say of himself that, though he might not be much of a general, he was the "best commissariat officer" in his army; and his practical mind fully realised how soon a badly fed army deteriorates.

† *Supplementary Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, edited by his son, 1866, vol. vii. p. 221.

‡ The Tagus, too, especially in the dry season, could be forded at

I have been obliged to give up the blockade, we have done some good by this operation ; we have saved Galicia till now, and likewise the partisan Mina.\* I don't despair of being able yet to save Galicia and Mina by keeping in employment, in attending to us, all the disposable troops which might be employed to attack either."

By December, 1811, the French held possession of almost all the fortified places of Spain, including the important fortresses of *Ciudad-Rodrigo* and *Badajoz*.

On the other hand, the Allies had defeated every effort of theirs to hold Portugal (for Junot, Soult, and Massena had all failed to conquer that country), and were in possession of the Portuguese fortresses of *Almeida* and *Elvas*.

The continuance of the war was each year making it more and more difficult for the French to subsist in the exhausted districts which had been the scene of the operations of their large armies, and they soon found themselves compelled to scatter their troops widely in search of food. It is upon this fact that the important events of the year 1812, which we are about to discuss, mainly turned.

At the close of 1811 the character of the struggle had in short begun to alter, and " Wellington with his sixty thousand British and Portuguese soldiers appeared on the offensive in the midst of one certain points ; and the French had now a bridge at Almaraz. They could cross the Guadiana also.

\* Dorsenne had been threatening Galicia, and Mina, a very active guerilla chieftain, had been so troublesome in Navarre and the north, by attacking the French communications, that they were making great efforts to put him down.

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hundred and fifty thousand enemies" (Alison's *History of Europe*).

"A limit had now been placed upon Napoleon's conquests; a French army never entered Portugal again. Spain was thenceforward to be the theatre of war, and Wellington had brought to a triumphal issue a defence which astounded soldiers and statesmen throughout the civilised world." \*

At this period he himself thus sums up the position of affairs.

"The contest is expensive, and affords but little or no hopes of success except by tiring the French out. After all, military success probably could not reasonably be expected in a contest between the powers of the Peninsula and Great Britain on one side and the French on the other, which had begun by the French seizing the armies, the fortified places, the arms, and the resources of the Peninsula. These are circumstances to which the people do not advert in general, but they bear upon every event of the contest. We have already in some degree altered the nature of the war, and of the French military system. They are now in a great measure on the defensive, and are carrying on a war of magazines.† They will soon, if they have not already, come upon the resources of France; and as soon as that is the case, you may depend upon it the war will not last long." ‡

\* *Wellington*, by W. O'Connor Morris, 1904.

† Meaning apparently that by forcing the French to concentrate he had altered their power to live day by day upon the supplies in their neighbourhood, and that the contest was turning now upon the question of whether their leaders could create and fill magazines, and thus keep the French armies assembled, as Wellington could his.

‡ *Wellington Despatches*, vol. viii. (Ed. 1838), pp. 245-6.

Before closing this chapter it must be said that those who would realise to any correct extent what Wellington had accomplished by the close of the year 1811, must bear in mind that in addition to his military responsibilities he had to aid the Cabinet at home in overcoming bitter opposition to his plans for the war, and to meet himself continual intrigue, jealousy, and obstruction in Portugal and Spain. His despatches and correspondence show that to cope with the French, and organize and lead his army, keeping it even tolerably fed, equipped, and paid, formed but a small part of the anxious labour which devolved upon him. Political, financial, and commercial questions of a general nature, many of them of an intricate character, had all to be dealt with by him in the midst of his field operations, from his cantonments or his tent, and his letters as to these form state papers showing exceptional breadth of grasp, and power. It will give some idea of the description of many of these question to mention simply one—viz. whether England, as the ally of Spain, was not bound in honour to assist her to reconquer the Spanish colonies which had revolted against the home government, as well as aid her against France? In view of England's efforts to reconquer her own revolted American colonies thirty years before and their result, together with the Spanish feeling upon the points involved, this was a question not to be easily or hastily dealt with; but Napier, alluding to Wellington's memorandum in reply written from the field, says \*: “It was on such occasions that

\* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War* (1834), vol. iv. p. 156.

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all his power of mind was displayed, and his manner of treating this question proved that in political, and even in commercial affairs, his reach of thought and enlarged conceptions immeasurably surpassed the Cabinet he served, and when we consider that his opinions, stated in 1811, have since been verified in all points to the very letter, it is impossible not to be filled with admiration of his foresight and judgment."

It was one of the smallest of Wellington's worries and annoyances that a vote of thanks for this or that victory was opposed at home; Talavera, the retreat to the lines, Fuentes d'Onor, etc., belittled or censured; and the passage of the Douro deemed an easy feat.

The scope of these pages prevents us from enlarging further on this subject; but in even the briefest account of the war it is one which should be touched upon, for probably no British commander in the field has ever had to contend with greater difficulties upon the whole, taking the civil with the military, than Wellington in the years 1809, 1810, and 1811 \*; and it is probably not too much to say that had his personal exertions flagged in any degree, or his health failed, the struggle against the French in the Peninsula would soon have been abandoned.

Possessing, fortunately, an iron nerve and constitution, he bore the strain, and stood, to the end, an unshaken tower of strength to the nations whose cause he served.

\* This is all very fully brought out in *Wellington's Operations in the Peninsula* (1808-14), by Captain Lewis Butler, late King's Royal Rifle Corps. (1904.)

## CHAPTER X

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CAMPAIGN IN SPAIN, 1812

(FIRST PERIOD)

CAPTURE OF CIUDAD-RODRIGO AND BADAJOZ—SURPRISE  
OF ALMARAZ

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AT the opening of the year 1812, Napoleon had attained to the highest pinnacle of his power and greatness, and had largely reinforced his armies in Spain ; but the events which one by one led to his downfall were about to commence. Having resolved upon the invasion of Russia, he withdrew from the Peninsula for this enterprise (in December, 1811) about 20,000 of his soldiers, including the Imperial Guard, and it became certain that he himself would conduct in person the war with Russia.

The French armies in Spain, even after the departure of the troops for Russia, very far outnumbered the forces of the Allies. Two hundred and fifty thousand French soldiers, under various marshals, were scattered over the Peninsula in its different provinces ; but these armies, as the resources of the country had become greatly exhausted by the number of people who now for

## 213 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (1ST PERIOD)

<sup>Jan.</sup> <sub>1812</sub> years had fed upon it—a point we have already drawn attention to—had to disperse over extended districts in order to obtain sustenance; and the guerilla bands had become very active in the Asturias and the northern provinces of Spain. The French were distributed as follows:—

1st.—*The Army of the North*, under Dorsenne, about 48,000—in wide cantonments along the River Pisuerga, with one division (under Bonnet) in the Asturias, and others in the districts about St. Ander and St. Sebastian, employed in suppressing the guerilla bands.

2nd.—*The Army of Portugal*, under Marmont, about 50,000—also in wide cantonments in the valley of the Tagus (about Plasencia, Toledo, and other points), with two divisions detached to a distance towards Valencia, to aid the troops who, under Marshal Suchet, were occupying that province. Marmont had, however, received orders to move with his army to Salamanca and Valladolid, for the great line of communication with France was so much weakened by the dispersion of the Army of the North, and so harassed by guerilla attack, that it was considered necessary by Napoleon to bring Marmont closer towards it.

Ciudad-Rodrigo was held by a weak French garrison, and the Army of the North was considered sufficient to watch it at present, and prevent its being laid siege to by Wellington.

When Marmont reached Salamanca he was to be entrusted with the protection of this fortress, and was also to assume command of Bonnet's division of the Army of the North, which occupied the Asturias.

3rd.—*The Army of the South*, under Soult, Jan. about 55,000, in occupation of Andalusia, and <sup>1812</sup> garrisoning the fortress of Badajoz.

4th.—*The Army of the Centre*, under Joseph, about 19,000, around Madrid.

Other troops, whose positions we need not detail, were quartered at various points throughout Spain, holding the country and endeavouring to keep open the communications.

The greater part of the Anglo-Portuguese army, under Wellington, about 50,000 strong, was at this time cantoned upon both banks of the Coa, and garrisoned the fortress of Almeida, opposite Ciudad-Rodrigo. For health's sake, as well as for the convenience of supply, it also, like the French armies, had spread over a large district; but this with the Allies was a measure of convenience more than of strict necessity, as in the case of the French.

A force, under Hill, about 10,000, was in the Alemtejo, guarding that province, and protecting the fortress of Elvas, opposite Badajoz, which was held by the Allies.

Although Wellington, by the dispersion of his troops and quiet attitude along the banks of the Coa, did not appear to be bent upon any offensive movement, but, on the contrary, to be solely occupied with the care and provisioning of his own army and with watching over the Portuguese frontier, he had been longing with impatience for the moment when he might fall with some prospect of success upon his adversaries.

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Jan.  
1812

He had at this time these advantages over the French :—

1st. A *comparatively concentrated position*, for though his forces were scattered, they were not nearly so much so as those of the enemy. He himself, on the River Coa and about Almeida, was hardly more (at the most extreme points of his position) than a hundred miles from Hill near Elvas ; while the three French Armies, of the North, Portugal, and the South, were extended from the Asturias down to Cadiz, covering some five hundred miles of territory. He could thus collect his whole army in a few days, while the scattered corps of the French could not unite for any general combined operation for several weeks.

2nd. A greater power of *obtaining and forwarding supplies*—in other words, of operating more quickly. The attention of Napoleon had been for some time mainly absorbed by his difficulties with Russia, and he had latterly expected his armies in the Peninsula to support themselves even more than ever upon the immediate districts of country which they were occupying, not even drawing food from other parts of Spain. Some of the provinces had been so much reduced by the devastations and exactions of the troops, that the resources of the soil yielded little sustenance, and the peasants, also, had in many cases abandoned the land and joined the guerilla parties in the mountains, thus leaving the ground uncultivated. The French were often in the greatest distress from want of food, so that even when they did concentrate for any pressing operation, unless they could carry it

through rapidly they were forced to give it up, and again spread themselves out over the land.

Jan.  
1812

Wellington, on the contrary, though sometimes harassed himself by a deficiency of food and carriage, had the navigable portions of the Douro, the Mondego, and the Tagus, over which to bring his supplies from the ocean, and the great harbour of Lisbon and Oporto, to which the command of the sea gave English ships free access ; all his energies had also been bent during the winter towards improving and extending the navigation of these rivers, and the Douro was being rapidly made navigable as far as its confluence with the River Agueda.

The Mondego was available for water-carriage to within a hundred miles of the Portuguese frontier ; and the Tagus as far as Abrantes. Thus, in operating by either Almeida or Elvas, Wellington could bring his supplies by water to within a comparatively short distance of these fortresses, though the land carriage over the intervening ground presented great difficulties.

Moreover, the regularity with which everything was now paid for by the British made the population of Portugal ready and eager to bring them all necessaries. Thus Wellington's army was more mobile than that of the French, though the latter outnumbered it ; and on this he based, in a large measure, his plans for the campaign we are about to describe.

But before he could commence any lengthened operations in Spain, and turn the above advantages to account, he considered it necessary to wrest from

## 217 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (1ST PERIOD)

Jan.  
1812

the French the fortresses of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz. The want of an adequate siege-train and equipment had in the previous year been largely the cause of the failure to reduce Badajoz, and had compelled him to merely blockade Ciudad-Rodrigo, which by this measure he had been unable to capture before Marmont had relieved it. Therefore he had since made great efforts to be in a better position to undertake the sieges of these strongholds.

There are few who have not read of the celebrated captures by assault of these fortresses, where English heroism was so brilliantly exemplified and English lives were offered up in hundreds ; and Wellington, provided they were secured, did not consider even a large sacrifice of life in the small army which he commanded too high a price to lay down for their possession. Why this was so we shall explain in the Comments, further on.

Great pains had been taken to prepare secretly for their capture. A powerful battering train, with equipage complete, had been provided some months beforehand at Lisbon, and ostentatiously embarked at that harbour as if for England ; then at sea it was shifted into smaller boats and conveyed to Oporto, and from thence up the Douro and by land to Lamego, from whence it was subsequently introduced with safety into Almeida. So quietly was this operation conducted that neither the English nor French suspected that any siege was in contemplation, and it was imagined that the guns were only intended to arm and strengthen Almeida.

The health of the Allied armies had been very

indifferent for some time after they had first occupied their cantonments about the Coa ; the pay had been long in arrears ; the equipment bad ; and, generally, the army had hardly been in a fit condition to commence prolonged operations.

The French knew of this ; but they did not know that in the month of December (after the cessation of the rains) the sickness had ceased, that supplies had become abundant, and that, in all things, the efficiency of the Allied army had much improved. This was a great advantage to Wellington. He was ready, by the close of December, 1811, to commence operations, and the French were resting in fancied security. The scattered positions which their troops had assumed, as well as the probability that the Russian war would prevent Napoleon from sending reinforcements into the Peninsula, gave to him the opportunity he had so long sought and prepared for, and he immediately seized it.

Towards the end of December, 1811, he caused General Hill to advance into Estremadura, in order to attract the attention of Soult, directing his own troops, at the same time, to prepare fascines and gabions in their several villages, and to lay down upon the River Agueda a portable trestle bridge which had been secretly constructed in the fortress of Almeida. The advance of Hill towards Soult caused that marshal, as was intended, to take alarm for the safety of Badajoz, and he at once began to concentrate all his troops in Andalusia for a march in that direction.

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Jan.  
1812

Everything now being ready, Wellington, breaking up from his cantonments in the north, suddenly passed the Agueda to the right bank, and, on January 8th, 1812, invested Ciudad-Rodrigo, a body of Portuguese being posted also on the left bank near a bridge over the river.

### SIEGE OF CIUDAD-RODRIGO

*Commenced January 8th, 1812; terminated  
January 19th, 1812*

(See plan facing page 225)

The siege of this fortress, and subsequently that of Badajoz, form such important incidents in the Peninsular War, that we must touch upon some of their principal features, although we cannot enter into many details.

Ciudad-Rodrigo stands, partly upon elevated ground, on the right bank of the Agueda, a river liable to sudden rises, but which was at this time fordable in places; a bridge existed on the west side, commanded by the works. It was not so strong a fortress as Badajoz, but, nevertheless, was a permanent work of masonry, with a double enceinte, the interior wall being 32 feet in height. There was also a castle, or keep, of some strength on the west side. The garrison consisted of over 2,000 men; heavy ordnance was mounted on the walls; and, in advance of the fortress, entrenched suburbs, with the fortified convents of Santa Cruz, St. Francisco, and St. Domingo, as well as other buildings, formed an outer line of defence.

Around the fortress, except on the south and

north sides, the ground was generally flat. On the <sup>Jan. 8-17,</sup> north there were two hills, named the Great Teson <sup>1812</sup> and the Small Teson, the last being nearest to the fortress.

On the Great Teson the French had erected a small redoubt named Fort Francisco. This side of Ciudad-Rodrigo (the north) was the one most strongly defended ; but on the other hand, on account of the hills of the Great and Small Teson, it was that from which the fortress could be most easily breached, if these hills could be secured ; the ground on this side was also less rocky and difficult to work on than that on the east, south, or west.

It was therefore determined to commence operations by storming the redoubt on the Great Teson ; from thence to subdue the outer line of defences, work forward to the Small Teson, and having by the usual parallels, approaches, and fire of the siege batteries made practicable breaches in the enceinte of the fortress, assault the place on that side, while also threatening or attacking other points.

On the night of January 8th, 1812, the day on which the place was invested, Fort Francisco, on the Great Teson, was most gallantly taken by escalade by a detachment under the command of Colonel Colborne (afterwards Lord Seaton) and the first parallel at once commenced.

Between that and the 17th the convents of Santa Cruz and St. Francisco, and also the suburbs, were reduced ; and the siege batteries, which kept up a continuous fire, were pushed forward to the Small Teson.

Time was a great object to Wellington, as it had

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Jan. 19, 1812, become known that Marmont was already on his march towards Salamanca, and it was certain that he would endeavour to succour the fortress before the place could be reduced by the regular process of a siege, which it had been calculated would occupy twenty-four days.

Therefore, on January 19th—*i.e.* twelve days after the investment—two breaches, termed the Great Breach (see plan) and the Small Breach being deemed practicable, the assault was ordered for that evening at 7 o'clock, the garrison, on being summoned, having refused to surrender.\*

Assaulting columns at sieges were, speaking generally, composed at this period of a storming party led by its forlorn hope, having with it scaling ladders with which to mount the walls, and men carrying tools—such as axes, saws, crowbars—and sometimes explosives, with which to cut down or remove gates, palisades, and other obstructions. They were aided at Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz by parties carrying fascines or bags of hay to throw into the ditch for the men to jump down upon ; firing parties were detailed to keep down the fire of the garrison, and reserves held in hand to press on in support directly the place was entered. The actual stormers trusted chiefly to the bayonet, and the service was naturally one of extreme peril ; the men carrying tools, bags of hay, etc., did not carry arms.

\* Both here and at Badajoz, in order to save time, the assault was delivered before the counterscarp was blown in, so that the columns of assault could not descend as a formed body into the ditch to mount the breach, but had to jump down into it. This necessarily checked them and broke their formation.

The stormers were accompanied usually by an engineer officer to show the way, and were given orders as to communicating with and assisting each other. More than one point was threatened, so as to distract the garrison ; and false attacks were turned into real ones should opportunity offer.

At the storming of Ciudad-Rodrigo a party of Portuguese from the left bank were to move against an outwork near the castle and try to drive the artillerymen there from their guns. Another was to make a false attack near the St. Jago gate ; and the real assault was to be thus pressed :—

#### *Right Attack*

Columns issuing from the convent of Santa Cruz were to enter the ditch at points west of the Great Breach, escalade what is termed the Fausse Braye, and turn to their left towards the breach.

#### *Centre Attack*

A column issuing from a point north of the Great Breach was to make direct for that breach. It was to be preceded by men with hay-bags to throw into the ditch ; protected by a strong covering party ; and followed by a brigade of the 3rd Division.

#### *Left Attack*

Two columns issuing from the convent of St. Francisco were to enter the ditch east of the Great Breach, one turning to the right to connect with the centre attack, the other making for

## 223 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (1ST PERIOD)

Jan. 19, 1812, the Small Breach, and, after carrying it, to take the defenders of the Great Breach, if still there, in flank.

The Salamanca gate was then to be burst open to let in the reserves. All the columns had scaling-ladders, axes, etc.

The assault was pressed with great gallantry under a heavy fire from the garrison, and was completely successful. The defenders made a determined resistance, and had prepared a number of shells and a quantity of combustibles at the foot of the Great Breach, but exploded these prematurely. They also had formed a retrenchment behind the Great Breach, but the Small Breach having been carried they gave way, and after a sharp conflict from work to work the place fell, Colonel Gurwood\* receiving the sword of the governor in the castle.

The loss of the Allies was about 1,300 killed and wounded; that of the French was comparatively small, but nearly 1,800 of the garrison were made prisoners. Marmont's battering train, 150 guns, and an immense quantity of stores fell into Wellington's hands, and "Ciudad-Rodrigo," as a bar to the Peninsular medal and battle-honour, commemorates this gallant exploit of carrying in twelve days, in the depth of winter, and with an army of 40,000 men, a fortress which, in summer, had resisted Massena, with an army of 80,000, for six weeks.

At this siege Generals Craufurd and McKinnon fell, both valuable officers, the former having been

\* Subsequently the editor of the *Wellington Despatches*.

mortally wounded while giving instructions to the column of the Light Division moving to assault the Small Breach. Though strict, at times to severity, he had by zeal and ability brought his division to a state of great efficiency, and gained the complete confidence of all ranks in it. It has been said of him that his fault was that he was “too apt to aim at objects which were really the province of the Commander-in-Chief,” \* and possibly this was so ; but notwithstanding, Wellington so greatly appreciated his valuable qualities as a commander of division that he to the last desired to have him with him, and kept him in the front. That he did so speaks highly for both leaders.

Marmont had not heard of the Allies having passed the Agueda until January 15th. As soon as this intelligence reached him, he made every effort to succour the fortress. Bonnet from the Asturias, his own army from the valley of the Tagus, the two divisions detached towards Valencia, and Dorsenne with the Army of the North, were all urged on to move towards Salamanca, but it was too late. By the time Marmont arrived, Ciudad-Rodrigo had fallen, the breaches had been repaired, provisions and a Spanish garrison had been thrown in, and the Allies had retired. Marmont’s battering train having been captured, he had no immediate prospect of recovering the fortress, and so fell back again to Valladolid, and to points in the valley of the Tagus. Shortly afterwards, upon

\* *General Craufurd and his Light Division*, by the Rev. Alexander H. Craufurd.

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Jan. to  
March,  
1812

receiving orders from Napoleon, he moved again to Salamanca. The other French armies assumed much their old positions, and the Allies also took up their former ground about the Coa.

After the capture of Ciudad-Rodrigo, Lord Wellington was created Earl of Wellington ; and also Duke of Ciudad-Rodrigo by Spain, and Marquis of Torres Vedras by Portugal.

But one-half only of the prize sought for by Wellington had been yet gained, and he now turned his attention towards Badajoz. He hoped that he might, if his march could be concealed, reach the Alemtejo before Marmont had information of his movements, and take the fortress before Soult and Marmont combined could force him to raise the siege. He was also aware that Marmont, having lost his battering train, could not in his absence easily reduce Almeida ; but on the other hand he knew that Badajoz was of greater strength than Ciudad-Rodrigo, that he must march with nearly his whole force to reduce it, and that the French marshals, aroused from their indifference, were narrowly watching him. Before moving, he had to see that Ciudad-Rodrigo was sufficiently provisioned to hold out during his absence ; also that arrangements were made for the supplies of his army upon the march, dépôts of provisions being formed in the north, to be available on the return of his troops. He had, moreover, to get his battering train as close as possible to Badajoz without attracting attention. For these reasons his preparations were carried on with





SIEGE OF  
CIUDAD RODRIGO

1812

Allies.....

Light Div<sup>n</sup>

Spanish Entrenchments

St Domingo

Ciudad  
Rodrigo

The Castle

St Jago Gate

Portuguese

Great Breach  
Small Breach

Great Teson

Enchances and Batteries of Belicoso

Fort Francisco

Small Teson

Santa Cruz

Suburbs To Salamanca

Salamanca Gate

St Domingo

Portuguese

Portuguese

Scale of  $\frac{1}{2}$  Mile

0       $\frac{1}{4}$        $\frac{1}{2}$

Stanford's Geog<sup>t</sup> Estab<sup>t</sup> London

London : Hugh Rees, Ltd.



redoubled secrecy, and the following *ruses* were March,  
had recourse to. I812

To blind the enemy, as well as to ensure supplies, dépôts were established at Celorico and places beyond the Douro, and every outward preparation was made that would have been resorted to had operations past Ciudad-Rodrigo been intended. At the same time a pontoon train (to pass the River Guadiana) was sent by water from Lisbon to Abrantes, and carts ordered to convey it to Elvas. A siege equipage also was embarked at Lisbon in ships bound nominally for Oporto, but which, altering their course at sea, sailed southwards and landed it at Setuval, whence it was conveyed in boats up the River Sardao to Alcaçer do Sal, and thence by carts to Elvas.

Engineer officers in Elvas, under pretence of strengthening that fortress, prepared fascines and gabions, and at length, in the first week of March, 1812, the Allied army was put in motion, Wellington remaining behind with his headquarters on the Coa to the last moment, in order to deceive the French. On March 9th he himself set out for Badajoz, leaving only some cavalry behind to watch Ciudad-Rodrigo.

The army crossed the Tagus on March 9th and 10th by a bridge of boats at Vilha Velha. On the 16th a pontoon bridge was thrown over the Guadiana, and on the 17th, after a needless and very detrimental delay caused by the failure of the Portuguese Government to provide carriage, Badajoz was fully invested, and what

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March,  
1812

is termed the "3rd English siege" of it commenced. Wellington's actual besieging force numbered about 22,000, while another under Hill of 30,000 was posted about Merida and Almandralejoz, to cover the siege against Soult, and to aid in drawing away the French from Tarifa, which they threatened to again attack.

### SIEGE OF BADAJOZ

*Commenced March 17th, 1812; terminated April 7th, 1812*

(See plan facing page 233)

Badajoz is situated on the left bank of the River Guadiana, which varies here from 300 to 500 yards in width and makes about one-fourth of the enceinte of the fortress unattackable. It was a work of what may be termed the first order at that period—a strong fortress with eight bastions, of which the escarp exceeded 30 feet in height.

On the left bank of the river, to the south and south-east, were two detached works, termed the Pardaleras and the Picurina, the latter being a strong redoubt. The castle, or old keep of the place, was on the north side, upon rising ground near the junction of the little River Rivillas with the Guadiana; and immediately opposite it, but on the right bank of the latter river, was Fort Christoval, a powerful redoubt, situated on a commanding height and communicating with the left bank by a bridge to the west. An inundation on the east side between the Picurina and the fortress extended for 200 yards along the front

of that portion of the place. The garrison consisted of about 5,000 men ; the works were well armed, and the governor, Phillipon, was a man of great resource and energy.

After reconnoitring Badajoz Lord Wellington determined to first lay siege to the Picurina redoubt, as from the hill on which it stood the enceinte could be most easily seen, and from thence to carry on the approach ; this therefore was undertaken.

During the siege of this redoubt the garrison by a sortie from the fortress caused some loss and damage, Lieutenant-Colonel Fletcher, the commanding Royal Engineer, being at this time wounded. The enemy, also, from the right bank of the Guadiana, east of Fort Christoval, brought a most annoying fire upon the besiegers, so that the 5th Division had to be brought up to prevent this ; and heavy rain carried away a pontoon bridge of the Allies over the Guadiana.

But at length, on March 25th, 1812, everything being sufficiently advanced, the Picurina redoubt, of which the defences, though injured, were not breached, was gallantly stormed, partly by escalade, with a loss of 350 men, and batteries were then established under great difficulties upon the hill, commanded as it was by the guns of the fortress.

A superiority of fire having been obtained, breaches were made (see plan) in the face of the bastion named La Trinidad (*a*), in the flank of that named Santa Maria (*b*), and in the curtain between these bastions (*c*) ; and these having

April 7, been reported practicable, the assault was ordered  
1812 for 10 o'clock on the night of April 7th, 1812; for here again, as at Ciudad-Rodrigo, the question of time had become a vital one with Wellington.

The French had been completely surprised by the sudden investment of Badajoz; but, nevertheless, their movements made it necessary for Wellington to endeavour to immediately carry the fortress by assault. Soult was approaching from Seville, and Marmont from Salamanca threatened Ciudad-Rodrigo.

The assault was conducted on much the same general principles as that of Ciudad-Rodrigo. The columns were directed to form up behind the Picurina Hill, and advance to the breaches past the western end of the inundation.

The 4th Division was to assault the breach in the bastion of La Trinidad.

The Light Division (advancing slightly before it) was to assault that on the flank of the bastion of Santa Maria. The storming party of each division was to consist of 500 men provided with ladders, axes, and crowbars, and also bags of hay to be thrown into the ditch. Each division was to have a reserve of 1,000 men at the quarry, south of the Santa Maria bastion. Firing parties were to follow the storming parties.

The 3rd Division was to carry the castle, if possible, by escalade, and then fall on the rear of the defenders of the breaches.

The 5th Division was to carry the bastion of St. Vincente, on the west side, by escalade; or

the curtain and flank between it and the River Guadiana; while a general artillery fire was to be directed upon the Pardaleras, upon the works towards the Guadiana, and upon the enemy's batteries which bore upon the breaches.

The Light and 4th Divisions, though they assaulted the breaches more than once with desperate courage, were on each occasion driven back. In the conflict the right direction was not altogether taken, and both divisions soon found themselves opposite the breach of La Trinidad. After renewed attempts to storm it, repulsed with great slaughter, the men got mixed together, lost formation, and either stood in the ditch to be slaughtered, or returned the enemy's fire, instead of making further efforts with the bayonet.

The breaches in the Santa Maria bastion and in the curtain were also attempted without success; but unfortunately, the main efforts were directed against that of La Trinidad, which was subsequently discovered to be the least practicable of all.

So heavy was the carnage at the breach of La Trinidad that Wellington ordered the two divisions to be withdrawn, preparatory to a further fresh assault before daylight.

Napier thus describes the scene at this breach:—

“The bursting of shells and grenades, the roaring of guns from the flanks, answered by the iron howitzers from the battery of the parallel, the heavy roll and horrid explosion of the powder-barrels, the whizzing flight of the blazing splinters,

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the loud exhortations of the officers, and the continual clatter of the muskets, made a maddening din.

“Now a multitude bounded up the great breach as if driven by a whirlwind ; but across the top glittered a range of sword-blades, sharp-pointed, keen-edged on both sides, and firmly fixed in ponderous beams, which were chained together and set deep in the ruins ; and for ten feet in front the ascent was covered with loose planks studded with sharp iron points, on which the feet of the foremost being set, the planks slipped, and the unhappy soldiers, falling forward on the spikes, rolled down upon the ranks behind. . . . Again the assailants rushed up the breaches, and again the sword-blades, immovable and impassable, stopped their charge, and the hissing shells and thundering powder-barrels exploded unceasingly.” In addition to all this a deeper ditch had been dug to a depth of 17 feet in the main ditch and partially filled with water, in which many of the assailants were drowned.

In short, the activity and skill of the French governor had made the forcing of the breach of La Trinidad a task beyond human power to achieve, and in the confusion and darkness the assailants were mown down by hundreds. It is the heroism evinced in the renewal of the assault again and again which must excite our wonder, and not that it was evinced in vain.

But though the assault of the breaches failed, the 3rd Division (under Picton, another of Wellington’s distinguished divisional generals), and the

5th Division under General Leith, completely April 7,  
succeeded in what also appeared to be an under-<sup>1812</sup> taking almost beyond hope of accomplishment—viz. the escalade of the castle, and the bastion of St. Vincente.

What an extraordinary feat this was will be understood when it is said that, although the attention of the garrison was mainly fixed upon the assault of the breaches, still, the defenders of those parts of the enciente to be escaladed were all at their posts, and made a very obstinate resistance; so that the assault was no surprise.

The wall of the castle was from 18 to 24 feet high, and partially flanked; the escarp of the bastion of St. Vincente 31 feet high, flanked by artillery and musketry, and there were also palisades and other obstacles to be overcome. Stones, shells, and hand-grenades were hurled down on the assailants from above. The ladders were overthrown again and again, and again and again set up, till after a desperate and prolonged conflict both castle and bastion were at last carried, though with great loss of the Allies, that at the bastion of St. Vincente being 600.

What the troops accomplished here is thus referred to by Colonel (afterwards Sir John) Jones, in his *Journals of the Sieges undertaken by the Allies in Spain in 1811 and 1812*: “The efforts of British troops occasionally set all calculation at defiance, and when a few years shall have swept away the eye-witnesses of their achievements of this night, they will not be credited, particularly the escalade made by General Leith.”

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April 7,  
1812

The castle, and the bastion of St. Vincente, being in the hands of the Allies, the enemy was driven into the town, so that it was unnecessary to make further attempts at the breaches ; and thus Badajoz fell. The garrison were made prisoners, and the governor retired to Fort Christoval, where he surrendered the following morning. After the escalade of St. Vincente there was a momentary panic raised by a false report of a mine being about to be sprung, but order was restored before any evil consequences had ensued.

The total loss of the Allies in this siege was nearly 5,000, including 700 Portuguese, and in the assault alone over 3,600 fell, 2,000 at the breaches. Generals Kempt, Harvey, Bowes, Colville, and Picton were all wounded, and the dangerous nature of the service to which the corps of Royal Engineers, weak in numbers, was exposed, is shown by the fact that at this siege, out of 19 officers employed, 13 were killed or wounded. In the two sieges of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz together, out of 26 employed, 19 were killed or wounded.

“Badajoz,” as a bar to the Peninsular medal and a battle-honour, commemorates this success.

A French tri-colour taken at the capture of Fort Picurina, and two colours of the Hesse-Darmstadt Regiment, then in the French service, captured at Badajoz, now hang in the chapel and hall of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea.

After the capture of the town, as had been the case also in Ciudad-Rodrigo, deplorable excesses occurred, in spite of all efforts of the officers to





SIEGE OF  
BADAJOZ

1812

English Miles

1/4  
0  
1/4

Allies

Front lines

RIVER GUADIANA

Bridge Head

Portuguese

Christians

French  
Guns

Walls

3<sup>rd</sup> Div'

4<sup>th</sup> Div'

5<sup>th</sup> Div'

6<sup>th</sup> Div'

7<sup>th</sup> Div'

8<sup>th</sup> Div'

9<sup>th</sup> Div'

10<sup>th</sup> Div'

11<sup>th</sup> Div'

12<sup>th</sup> Div'

13<sup>th</sup> Div'

14<sup>th</sup> Div'

15<sup>th</sup> Div'

16<sup>th</sup> Div'

17<sup>th</sup> Div'

18<sup>th</sup> Div'

19<sup>th</sup> Div'

20<sup>th</sup> Div'

21<sup>st</sup> Div'

22<sup>nd</sup> Div'

23<sup>rd</sup> Div'

24<sup>th</sup> Div'

Badajoz

Trinidad

Pardaleras

Quarry

Light

High

Low

High



prevent them, and they form a dark page in the April 7,  
history of the war. 1812

"Recent toil and hardship with much spilling of blood had made many incredibly savage";\* and some of the soldiers, inflamed with drink from the pillaged wine-cellars, and furious with the resistance they had met with, spared neither friend nor foe.

It was amid this scene that a Spanish lady of rank threw herself on the protection of the future Sir Harry Smith, then in the 95th Rifles and on the staff. Becoming afterwards his wife, she accompanied him in later years to South Africa, where the names of Harrismith and Ladysmith, so familiar to us now, and also Juanasberg, perpetuate their memory.

Both armies now remained in cantonments for some time. The Allies required rest, and operations for mounted troops, owing to the exhausted state of the country, were difficult before the green crops would supply forage for the horses. During this interval Wellington, by a determined exertion of authority, prevailed upon the Spanish and Portuguese Governments to strengthen, victual, and properly garrison the recently captured fortresses, which he threatened to blow up unless his wishes were executed. He also made strenuous efforts to accumulate supplies, pushed on preparations for a meditated advance into Spain, and in the month of May, 1812, was again ready to move forward.

\* Napier's *Peninsular War*.

May,  
1812

By this date Marmont had strengthened Salamanca by the construction of forts considered capable of sustaining a siege ; had also fortified Zamora and Toro upon the Douro ; and was holding the country between Salamanca and Valladolid. The other French armies occupied much the same positions they were in before the opening of the campaign : Bonnet was again in the Asturias, and the Armies of the North, the Centre, and the South in nearly their old places, but all greatly scattered.

Wellington, having determined to carry out further operations in Spain, had next to decide whether he would attack Marmont, Joseph, or Soult ; and he determined to move against Marmont.

Before doing so, however, he resolved if possible to render the communication between Soult on the south bank of the Tagus, and Marmont or Joseph on the north, longer and more difficult. Soult's pontoon train had been captured in Badajoz, and during the various movements made in the last years of the war every permanent bridge upon the Tagus, across which good roads led, had been destroyed by one or other of the hostile armies. Between Toledo and the frontier of Portugal there was now but one good and easy passage over the river, which was by a bridge of boats constructed by the French at Almaraz, and for the defence of which they had erected some strong enclosed works. A French force guarded these works ; but Wellington determined to make an effort to capture them by surprise.

Hill, who was then near Badajoz, and who had May, given proofs during the autumn of 1811, at Arroyo<sup>1812</sup> dos Molinos and elsewhere, of his ability for this sort of service, was ordered to undertake the enterprise. As in the advance upon Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz, so in this case also, it was necessary to endeavour to deceive the French. For this reason it was reported that an invasion of Andalusia was intended ; a bridge was thrown over the Guadiana at Merida, as if for the passage of the battering train from Elvas ; and the Portuguese militia moved into the Alemtejo—*i.e.* in the direction of Andalusia.

#### HILL'S OPERATIONS

##### *Surprise of Almaraz*

On May 11th, 1812, Hill set out from Almadradejuz ; on the 15th he reached Truxillo, and on the 16th Jaracejo, two leagues from Almaraz.

From a mountain ridge the position of the French was reconnoitred, and it was evident that they were entirely unaware of the proximity of any enemy. It seemed, however, impossible to reach the bridge without being discovered, and hopeless to attempt to carry it otherwise than by surprise, as strong defensive works armed with artillery, and with masonry towers in the centre 25 feet high, had been erected for its protection on both banks of the Tagus ; and a powerful fort, at Mirabete, besides other smaller works, closed the road leading to the bridge.

For two days Hill bivouacked in the mountain

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May  
19-20,  
1812

valleys reconnoitring, and eventually determined to attempt to surprise the French, by coming upon them down a little-used rough mountain road ; and then if possible to carry the works by escalade.

At 9 p.m. on May 19th, a brigade proceeded along this road; and before dawn of the 20th assembled near the fort on the left bank (called Fort Napoleon), the French, who by this time had become aware that some of the Allies were in the neighbourhood, having all their attention directed towards the road from Mirabete.

Thus, when Hill's men rushed forward at dawn upon the works with their scaling ladders, the enemy made but a confused resistance ; Fort Napoleon was carried, and the defenders laid down their arms ; while the garrison of the fort on the right bank (Fort Ragusa) fled in a panic. Many prisoners and a pair of colours were taken—the British loss being under 200 ; the works, boats, bridge, and stores were destroyed, and the guns rendered useless. The fort at Mirabete was not attacked, as Hill considered that its capture would be attended by a delay and loss which would not be justified, and might interfere with his return in time to support Wellington in his contemplated operations.

By the destruction of the bridge of Almaraz the garrison at Mirabete was cut off completely from the right bank of the Tagus.

“Almaraz,” as a battle-honour, is borne by the 50th and 75th Regiments, now the 1st Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment, and 1st Battalion, Gordon Highlanders, respectively.

Wellington was much pleased with this success, June 13, and writes on May 23rd, 1812: "Foy has been <sup>1812</sup> prettily humbugged, and must now go round by Toledo."

Thus the communication between Soult, and Joseph or Marmont, was lengthened ; and the surprise was also of this further advantage to Wellington, that, the French being no longer in force about Almaraz, he was enabled, without the enemy hearing of it, to repair the bridge at Alcantara, and, unknown to them, obtained an easier communication with Hill, and one shorter by many days than that which he had formerly possessed by Vilha Velha.

Every preparation possible before moving into Spain had now been completed ; and Hill's corps was strengthened to 20,000, to enable him to hold his own for a time against Soult. It had been further arranged that some Spanish troops in Galicia should distract the Army of the North by threatening the northern provinces ; and that an expedition composed of British and Spaniards should occupy the French in the east of Spain by a descent on the coast of Valencia or Catalonia.

All things being in readiness, Wellington, on June 13th, 1812, passed the Agueda into Spain, and commenced what may be termed the second period of the operations of this year.

Before discussing these, we will remark upon those which we have already described.

## COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

Respecting what has been said as to Wellington's plans for this campaign being largely based upon the weak points of the French system for supplying their army with provisions, Wellington himself, in a memorandum written in 1825, thus describes what this system was :—

"The French Revolution first introduced into the world new systems of war, the objects and results of which were to render war a resource instead of a burden to the belligerents, and to throw the burden upon the country which unfortunately became the seat of its operations. . . . They" (the troops) "were poured into some foreign country to live upon its resources. Their numbers stifled or overcame all local opposition; and whatever the loss or the misery which the system itself might occasion in the French armies, the first was of men who, when dead, could not complain; and success stifled the complaints of the survivors.

"Napoleon was educated in this system : he succeeded to the power it gave to the Government and carried its action to the greatest possible extent. . . . It must be observed that a French army, after quitting its magazines or a friendly country, never received a ration of provisions not procured by *la maraude*.

"Authority was given to send out a certain number of soldiers of each company to obtain provisions at each village or farmhouse in the neighbourhood of the road by which the army marched, or of the ground on which it encamped.

The soldiers were to force the inhabitants to deliver these provisions without payment or receipts; and it may well be believed that these acts of violence were not confined to forcing the delivery of provisions. Other articles of value were taken at the same time, and by the same coercive measures."

And, alluding especially to the campaign in Russia in 1812, in which the same system as in Spain was followed, he says:—

"It is frequently stated that Napoleon complained that his orders were not obeyed, and that magazines of provisions for his army were not formed upon the retreat at the places at which he had ordered that they should be formed. This may be true, but it must be observed that these orders were not given as other generals at the head of armies have given similar orders, pointing out the places where, and the means by which, these provisions were to be collected and stored in magazine—and by supplying the money necessary to pay for their cost. There was but one source for collecting these magazines; that was *la maraude*. . . .

"The system of the French army, then, was the cause of its irregularities, disorders, and misfortunes—and of its loss."\*

It was, in fact, the system of the French that

\* *Memorandum on the War in Russia in 1812*, written in 1825. See Appendix to *Personal Reminiscences of the Duke of Wellington*, by the Rev. G. R. Gleig. It is interesting to note that the Duke of Wellington evidently considered that the burning of Moscow in 1812 was due, not to the voluntary act of the Russians, but to French soldiers in search of plunder, and he gives his reasons for this.

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war should support war—*i.e.* that the supply of an army should be maintained as far as possible by exactions from the inhabitants of the hostile country in which the troops were operating.

Contributions were levied upon the occupied districts with merciless severity, and no payment was given in return. This system is not, and never has been in modern times, that of the British, with whom it is a principle to pay the inhabitants of the country for every article which they supply.

The French system is the most economical, and though harsh, may answer in a *short* war and with a conscript army, but it is very prejudicial to discipline, and in a long war such as that in the Peninsula the British system must prove the most advantageous, as it is also the most humane and just.

The French, by their method, gained one or two advantages. They became wonderfully expert in collecting food and forage; the soldiers, we are told, “were trained to reap the standing corn, and grind it by portable mills into flour; if green, they mowed it down with equal dexterity for their horses; if reaped” and hidden away by the inhabitants, “they forced it from the peasants’ place of concealment by placing the bayonet to their throats” (Alison).

Also, as a result of the above experience and training, they became *comparatively independent of their lines of supply*, and during periods of the Peninsular War were cut off from all supplies, and yet managed to exist as armies.

But there was another side to this picture, and it is interesting to observe how completely the Duke

of Wellington condemns the system. Writing to Lord Liverpool, December 14th, 1811, he says : “The French begin to find that they *cannot keep their large armies together* for any operation which will take time, and that when we can reach them they can do nothing with small bodies.” Again : “They” (*i.e.* the French) “live by the authorised and regulated plunder of the country, if any should remain ; they suffer labour, hardships, and privations every day ; they go on, without pay, provisions, money, or anything, but they *lose in consequence half their army in every campaign.*”

The opinion also of Marmont himself is instructive :—

“MARMONT to BERTHIER, February 26th, 1812.

“I arrived at the headquarters of the north in January last. I did not find a grain of corn in the magazine ; nothing anywhere but debts, and a real or fictitious scarcity, the natural result of the absurd system of administration which has been adopted. Provisions for each day’s consumption could only be obtained with arms in our hands. There is a wide difference between that state and the possession of magazines which can enable an army to move. On the other hand, the English army is always united and disposable, because it is supplied with money and the means of transport.”

It can be seen then, that the French, though they managed to remain in the country, did so only at the cost of great privations and losses. Owing to exceptional circumstances—viz. the

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weakness of the Spaniards, and the numerical inferiority of the Allied army—their destruction was for a long time deferred ; but it was only deferred, and when the Allied army became comparatively strong, the scattered French armies were unable to cope with it.

No army can, in fact, disperse itself thus with impunity in the presence of a powerful and organised enemy, and hence it is that at all times, in European warfare, supplies must be kept up, and the lines which form the thoroughfares of supply be jealously guarded. This is especially the case in the present day, because the enormous numbers in which European armies enter the field in war make it proportionately more difficult to supply them.

It is important that British officers should understand the grounds upon which the British system of paying scrupulously for all supplies obtained for the army in a hostile country is enforced, because, if acting in the field in alliance with the armies of other nations, they will probably find a different system to their own prevailing in those armies, and one which causes surprise, and perhaps jealousy, among their own men.

The strategical importance of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz to both the French and Allies can hardly be over-estimated, and should be understood. It was on account of this importance that Wellington was so anxious to secure them.

They were, so to speak, the gates through which an army operating from Spain into Portugal, or

from Portugal into Spain, must pass ; and while they were held by an enemy no movement could be made beyond either, unless a sufficiently large force could be left to surround and keep its garrison within the walls ; for except this could be done, no supplies could pass in safety along the great high roads leading past these strongholds. As long as the French held these two fortresses, Wellington, who did not command a large army, was *unable to make any sustained offensive movement into Spain* ; and until such a movement could be made it was evident that there could be no deliverance for the Peninsula.

In addition to this the French, if they occupied the fortresses, were in a position at any time to *threaten an invasion of Portugal by two different lines*, and the Allies were not sufficiently strong to oppose them in proper strength on both at once. Thus, if Soult concentrated the Army of the South towards Badajoz, and threatened an advance upon Elvas (and so through the Alemtejo upon Lisbon), Wellington would be obliged to leave Almeida and move southwards, thus uncovering the road past this last fortress to Marmont or Dorsenne. In the same way, if Marmont or Dorsenne advanced upon Almeida, and threatened Portugal with an attack from that direction, Wellington must oppose them, and therefore Hill's corps and the fortress of Elvas would be left to cope alone with Soult.

These fortresses, also, being places of strength, afforded good depôts for supplies and equipment for the army which held them.

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Moreover, in Ciudad-Rodrigo the whole siege equipage of Marmont's army had been deposited ; and as the French had no other nearer than Madrid, its capture would render a siege of Almeida impossible to them for a long period.

It would not have been sufficient for Wellington to capture *one* of these fortresses only, for the possession of a single one would not enable him to carry on operations for any time against the French.

For instance, if he took Ciudad-Rodrigo and then moved past it against Dorsenne or Marmont, an advance on the part of Soult from Badajoz upon Elvas would compel him to return again to save Lisbon. In the same way, if he took Badajoz only, he could not move far against Soult, as an attack upon Almeida would force him to turn back again towards the north. It is also evident that he dare not operate by the line followed in the Talavera campaign (*i.e.* by Plasencia and the valley of the Tagus, upon Madrid), for while the French held these fortresses they had it in their power to threaten him with an invasion of Portugal, or an attack in flank.

Thus, so long as Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz were in French hands, they were a standing menace to Portugal ; they confined Wellington to a weak defensive attitude within that kingdom ; and they afforded a screen behind which the French armies could move and change their position in safety. But Wellington, being in possession of Almeida, Ciudad-Rodrigo, Elvas, and Badajoz, could completely turn the tables upon the French, and from

## COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN 246

behind these fortresses threaten an advance against them from more than one direction—turning to account the superiority of situation which the parallel mountain chains traversing the Peninsula from east to west \* gave him over his enemy. The French would be in uncertainty whether he would advance up the valley of the Douro, the Tagus, or the Guadiana, and be obliged to carefully watch all these separate river basins.

Some of the chief circumstances which may render the siege of a fortress necessary, and not merely its blockade, are shown. If an army is large enough to blockade a fortress, confining its garrison closely within the walls, and at the same time pass on in sufficient strength to meet the enemy in the open field, the capture of the fortress may become unnecessary; but to do this requires a very large army. In the case before us the Allied army was not large enough to blockade and also pass the fortresses,† and it was always with Wellington a race with time for their capture. If two French corps combined could come upon him he could not hope to maintain the siege

\* Before explained in discussing the topography of the Peninsula.

† In the war with France in 1870 the German army surrounded the fortress of Metz, and passed on towards Paris; but they had to leave round Metz over 200,000 men out of their very large army in order to do so. In the present war between Japan and Russia, Japan could not operate with the full strength of her army to the north of Port Arthur till that fortress was in her hands; also, her fleet could be attacked from Port Arthur by the Russian fleet in its harbour. Therefore, although she had a large army, she determined to besiege and not merely blockade the fortress. Russia could not afford to lose Port Arthur, both on account of its being a fortified harbour for her fleet and for reasons of prestige. Therefore this fortress was besieged and also obstinately defended at great sacrifices.

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or blockade. This led him to hurry the sieges of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz to the utmost, and assault before he would have done so had time been of less importance to him. The result was a heavy expenditure of life.

With regard to the disgraceful excesses which followed the storm of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz, it should not be forgotten that scenes of disorder and bloodshed arouse the furious, brutal spirit among the worst of every class, and not among soldiers only.

Could there be more fiendish atrocities than were perpetrated by the French citizens in the Revolution, or by the Communists after 1870? And in England, in 1839, the Duke of Wellington said in Parliament that, though he had seen many towns stormed, none had been so badly treated as Birmingham in that quarter in which the Chartist rioters had gained the superiority.

The Journals of the sieges of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz show that in many respects the establishments of the army were defective, and the means placed at Wellington's disposal in troops, guns, transport, tools, and matériel insufficient.

The true character of the difficulties to be overcome in the theatre of war, and the assistance which the Governments of Spain and Portugal would afford, had been incorrectly estimated, and the vital importance of time in war had not been grasped.

The artillery, engineers, and line, of Wellington's

army accomplished wonders with the resources they had at hand, but under happier circumstances they would have succeeded with more certainty, more thoroughly, and with less loss of life.

Sir John Jones writes that when, as at these sieges, an exact adherence to the rules of art cannot be carried out, "all becomes chaos—time, life, and success are then put to hazard, and to this cruel alternative it is apparent from the Journals \* that Lord Wellington has been driven in all his attacks from the want of means, and due establishments to carry into effect his own more just ideas."

What seems chiefly to be noted, then, in connection with the sieges of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz (in addition to the importance of these fortresses, and the courage and determination of the besiegers), is that Wellington had neither the force, means, nor time to carry preliminary operations through, according to the accepted rules of war, before closing with the enemy; and also that at Badajoz, while the assault of the breaches failed, the escalade of the unbreached walls at two different points succeeded, thus showing the advantage of the attack having been made at more than one point.

The ruses often resorted to in war to deceive an enemy are illustrated in the steps taken by Wellington to mislead the French as to his designs upon Ciudad-Rodrigo, Badajoz, and the bridge at Almaraz. The secret and skilful manner in which his preparations and movements were made, and

\* *Journals and Sieges in Spain, 1811 and 1812.*

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the daring blows he struck, prove his genius and enterprise as a general, and completely refute the charge of over-caution in his operations which has been sometimes brought against him, especially by foreign critics. Marmont, taught by the loss of Ciudad-Rodrigo, had felt a little uneasy about Badajoz, and communicated his fears to Napoleon; but the latter wrote, " You must suppose the English mad to imagine that they will march upon Badajoz, leaving you at Salamanca"—i.e. in a situation to get to Lisbon before them. Yet Wellington not only did make this march, but succeeded in taking Badajoz.

Badajoz and Ciudad-Rodrigo were, it need hardly be said, both instances of "important strategical points" for the reasons detailed above; so also was the fortified bridge of Almaraz, for upon its maintenance in French hands, or destruction, depended the question of whether the French on the north and south of the Tagus could, or could not, unite quickly to oppose Wellington.

When Wellington, after the capture of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz, had to decide whether he would advance against Marmont, Joseph, or Soult, he determined to advance against Marmont, for these reasons :—

1st. The direction of this attack would threaten the French in a vital point—viz. the line of communication through Valladolid and Bayonne.

2nd. If successful, it would draw up Soult from

the south and the other armies from the north and east to save Madrid, which would then be in danger, and thus Andalusia would be freed ; whereas, if Soult were attacked, the other armies would only be drawn toward that province to his aid, and fasten more firmly upon it. The intention of the contemplated advance resembled, in fact, in this respect that of Sir John Moore in 1809.

## CHAPTER XI

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### CAMPAIGN IN SPAIN, 1812 (SECOND PERIOD)

CAPTURE OF FORTS AT SALAMANCA—BATTLE OF SALAMANCA—ENTRY INTO MADRID—SIEGE OF CASTLE OF BURGOS—RETREAT FROM BURGOS

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AFTER passing the Agueda on June 18th, 1812, to commence operations in Spain, Wellington moved to the River Tormes, and crossed it (June 17th) by fords above and below Salamanca ; while Marmont, having thrown a strong garrison into the forts at Salamanca, fell back before him in order to collect his scattered forces upon the Douro. Wellington then invested the forts, entering also the town of Salamanca, where he was received by the inhabitants with every demonstration of joy, they having suffered much during three years of French occupation.

#### CAPTURE OF FORTS AT SALAMANCA

The siege of these forts, though they were not of a character sufficient to resist very heavy guns, delayed Wellington ten days because, their strength having been misrepresented, the siege was begun

with inadequate means and insufficient ammunition. During it Marmont, with a portion of his army, manœuvred for some days upon the Tormes, in the hope of relieving the forts; but it was in vain, and they fell to Wellington on the 27th, the loss of the Allies in their capture having been about 600 men.

Marmont then took up a position behind the River Douro, and Wellington blew up the forts and followed him.

After some changes both armies, on July 8th, faced each other, as follows, upon the Douro (see Map V., facing page 273) :—

Marmont's right at Toro ; his centre at Tordesillas ; his left at Simancas on the Pisuerga River.

Over the River Douro there was but one bridge —viz. that at Tordesillas—left standing ; but at Pollos and some other points there were fords. The River Pisuerga was not fordable, but bridges over it existed at Simancas and Valladolid which were commanded by fieldworks.

One hundred cannon guarded the line.

Wellington had drawn up his army facing the French.

His left was on the Guarena River ; his centre on the Trabancos River ; and his right at Rueda. He had posts also near Tordesillas and opposite Pollos.

In this situation the armies remained for some days, for the waters of the Douro were very high, the fords difficult, and the French position a strong

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July 15,  
1812

one. Wellington, though he made arrangements for forcing a passage if necessary, was in hopes that Marmont, who was, he knew, without magazines and in want of stores, would soon have to retire again ; but in this he was disappointed. Marmont held on, and Wellington's position was becoming in his own judgment untenable. Bonnet had (on the 8th) joined Marmont from the Asturias ; a portion of the Army of the North (10,000) was said to be rapidly approaching ; and it was reported also that Joseph, with the Army of the Centre, was on his way from Madrid, with the intention of threatening the Allied line of communication through Salamanca.

But suspense was put an end to by Marmont assuming the offensive. Jealousy prevented the French marshals from placing trust in each other, and from answers which he had received to his letters he imagined that it was very doubtful if either Joseph or the Army of the North would come to his assistance. Being afraid that, if he waited, Hill would join Wellington, and both attack him together, he broke up from his position, and on July 15th, 1812, commenced a series of operations with the object of out-maneuvring his adversary.

### OPERATIONS PRECEDING THE BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

Marmont's operations were conducted with great ability ; and form, with Wellington's opposing movements, a most interesting part of what is commonly termed the Salamanca campaign of this year.

## OPERATIONS NEAR SALAMANCA 254

On July 15th and 16th he suddenly moved his army towards Toro, and with part of it crossed the Douro at that point, intending apparently to turn Wellington's left and march upon Salamanca.

Wellington became aware of this on the 16th, and united his centre and left at Canizal during the night, but only brought his right in as far as the Trabancos River, in order that it might still watch the country on the right bank of the Trabancos.

This movement of Marmont towards Toro was merely a blind, in order to draw away the Allies from the points of Tordesillas and Pollos, so that those passages over the Douro might be left open.

On July 17th the French general made a forced march back again along the right bank of the river, crossed it at Pollos and Tordesillas, and by nightfall had concentrated his whole army at Nava del Rey, some of his troops having marched forty and others fifty miles without a halt.

He had thus succeeded in his design of passing the Douro unopposed.

Wellington had gone to Toro to observe the French movements, and was there when, late at night on the 17th, he was informed of Marmont's change of position, and of the dangerous proximity of the enemy to his own right wing on the River Trabancos. It would have been perilous for Wellington to have left his right wing exposed to the French army until the left and centre could join it. On this account he now ordered it to fall back towards the Guarena, and proceeded to con-

## 255 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (2ND PERIOD)

July 18-  
19, 1812 centrate his whole army behind that river. In this movement—which was carried out on the 18th—the right wing of the Allies was closely pressed by the French, but it effected its junction safely with the rest of the army; an attempt made by Marmont to force a passage of the Guarena was defeated; and upon the 19th, both armies faced each other along the banks of this river, opposite to, and a little below, Canizal.

It was Wellington's object to cover the town of Salamanca, and also the road to Ciudad-Rodrigo. To reach this road, Marmont had to pass the Tormes River, over which fords existed at the points of Santa Marta, Aldea Lengua, Huerta, and Alba.

The ford at Alba was, Wellington thought, secured by the Allies, as there was a fort commanding it which was entrusted to a Spanish garrison. He hoped also to be able to reach Huerta, or the other fords, with equal or greater speed than his adversary.

He was therefore under no apprehension regarding any attempt on Marmont's part to turn his right and outmarch him to these fords upon the Tormes.

In this instance he under-rated the skill and rapidity with which Marmont could move, and his knowledge of the country. But also he was deceived as to the security of the ford at Alba; for on this, as on many previous occasions in the war, the Spaniards had disappointed him, and the officers in charge of the fort there had evacuated it without informing him, as they should have done. Marmont was aware of their withdrawal, and so

## OPERATIONS NEAR SALAMANCA 256

knew that at this point, if not at Huerta, he <sup>July 20,</sup> <sub>1812</sub> would find a passage.

On the evening of the 19th Marmont concentrated his troops towards his own left ; then, on the morning of the 20th, marching rapidly up the right bank of the Guarena, he passed that river unopposed, and moved across Wellington's right flank towards the fords of Huerta and Alba on the Tormes. Wellington, as soon as he saw that Marmont's design was to turn his right flank, made a corresponding movement up the left bank of the Guarena, and endeavoured, in the first instance, to cross the French line of march at Cantalpino. In this he failed, for on approaching this place it was evident that Marmont had outmarched the Allies ; so now turning and moving in a direction parallel to the French columns, he made for some high ground north of the ford of Aldea Lengua.

Then ensued some manœuvres of an exceptional character, and of special interest.

The whole country between the Trabancos and the Tormes is undulating and open ; and during some hours of July 20th, the hostile armies had marched for a long time upon parallel hilly ridges, within half musket-range of each other, yet without coming to battle. Each army was straining every nerve to outstrip its enemy, and there was no time for more than an occasional cannon-shot upon either side ; but yet the ranks had to be kept closed up, ready to form at once in order of battle, for both generals watched keenly for any error which would warrant an attack, and Wellington had

## 257 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (2ND PERIOD)

July 20-  
21, 1812

determined to make one if a good opening for it was presented. In this way the two armies both pressed towards the Tormes, the officers, Napier tells us, exchanging salutes and waving their caps at one another, and the cavalry moving about seeking an opening for a charge.\*

By nightfall on the 20th Marmont's leading column had reached Huerta, and secured the ford; while Wellington was upon some high ground close to Cabeza Velosa, with a division pushed on towards Aldea Lengua.

On the 21st Marmont crossed the Tormes by the fords of Huerta and Alba (placing a French garrison in the fort at Alba), and Wellington also passed the river by the fords of Santa Marta and Aldea Lengua. The French that evening encamped near Calvariza de Ariba, and occupied the wooded ground to its south, but had still some troops on the right bank of the Tormes. The Allies had their right near the village of Arapiles (a straggling village of some size), and their left about Santa Marta on both banks of the Tormes.

The night was very stormy and wet, with violent thunderstorms, and several men and horses were killed by lightning at Santa Marta. During it intelligence reached Wellington of the near approach of large cavalry reinforcements from the Army of the North to strengthen Marmont; and also that Joseph was certainly on the march from Madrid.

\* These movements, conducted within view of the enemy, and with the exchange of occasional cannon-shots, might perhaps be fairly termed "tactical" movements, though they were in reality more "strategical" in their character.

He now saw that, on account of the numbers of the enemy that were closing in upon him, it would hardly be practicable for him to accomplish more for Spain during this year's campaign than he had already done, and his mind was therefore made up to fall back, if not molested, once more to the frontier of Portugal ; when Marmont, who had intercepted a letter intimating his intention to do this, attempted to prevent it and brought on the

#### BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

*July 22nd, 1812*

(See plan facing page 267)

The Allies in this battle numbered about 46,000, with 60 guns ; the French about 42,000, with 74 guns, but they had considerable reinforcements coming up to strengthen them.

On the morning of July 22nd, 1812, the Allied right extended along a range of heights which ended in low ground near the village of Arapiles ; the left was on the River Tormes, near the ford of Santa Marta. The 3rd Division (under General Packenham) and a force of cavalry were, however, on the right bank of the river, entrenched at Cabrerizos, and watching that bank. There was also a cavalry post in front towards Calvariza de Abaxo.

The French, who had come up from the fords over the Tormes of Huerta and Alba, had occupied the ridge of Calvariza de Ariba ; their left being in the forest or wooded country south of

## 259 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (2ND PERIOD)

July 22  
1812 the hills called the Arapiles. Marmont also was bringing up from the right bank of the Tormes the troops he had left there on the previous night.

Wellington, in the position he occupied, covered Salamanca, and awaited the development of Marmont's further movements.

Owing to the course of the River Tormes (see Map V.), which flows from south to north between Alba and Huerta, but there takes a sharp bend to the west towards Salamanca, it had not up to this time been in the least certain upon which bank it might be the real intention of Marmont to operate; for his passage of the river might well have been merely a feint to deceive Wellington, while he afterwards doubled back and endeavoured, from the right bank, to turn the Allied left.

On the morning of the 22nd, however, it became more apparent that it was Marmont's design to strike at the Ciudad-Rodrigo road—the Allied line of retreat towards Portugal—and Wellington at once changed his position.

Between the French left and the British right were the hills of the Arapiles—two solitary heights, called also in some accounts “the Hermanitos,” of no great size but rather steep and rugged—which were of consequence to both armies as commanding positions from under cover of which they could carry out, and protect, their movements towards the Ciudad-Rodrigo road.

These “Arapiles” hills are so celebrated in connection with the famous battle of Salamanca,

that I place in a note \* below a few particulars July 22,  
regarding their character put down when going 1812  
over the battlefield some years ago. Spain is a  
country which changes little, and it is probable  
that the Arapiles wear much the same aspect  
now as they did in the time of Wellington.

At daylight there was practically a race for  
these hills; the Allies secured the one nearest to  
their position, marked on the plan as the "English  
Arapiles," and the French that nearest to theirs,  
marked as the "French Arapiles."

The 3rd Division (Packenham), with some  
cavalry, on the right bank of the Tormes, was now  
brought (a movement important to notice) across  
the river by Salamanca, out of sight of the enemy,  
to a wood in the direction of Aldea Tejada, a  
march of some few miles; the 1st and Light Divisions  
were sent up to confront the French at Calvariza  
de Ariba, and the remainder of the British with  
the Portuguese were massed along the ridges  
which run in a westerly direction from the village  
of Arapiles.

By these movements Wellington's original  
position was completely altered.

\* The English Arapiles is almost circular in shape, about 120 yards in diameter, and flat on the top. It is rocky and very rugged. Boulders cover the edge of its summit, and would form a formidable obstacle. The height is perhaps a little over 100 feet; the slope is about 30°, but steepest on the south (or French) side. Its distance from the French Arapiles is over 500 yards. The French Arapiles is also rocky with flat top, but in shape is longer and narrower. It is over 300 yards in length, and from 20 to 50 yards in breadth at the top. Its sides are very steep near the summit; but otherwise it is more easy of ascent than the English heights. Both hills stand prominently out from the surrounding ground, which in that district is of a reddish, almost orange-coloured, sandy clay. For an interesting field-sketch of this ground, and how it was made for Wellington on horseback and partly under fire, see *Aide Mémoire to the Military Sciences (Field-Sketching)*, page 537.

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July 22,  
1812 The 3rd Division, on advancing from Aldea  
Tejada, and which had formed at first the extreme  
left, became the right ; the hill of the English  
Arapiles, which had been close to the right, was  
now close to the left, and the general front of the  
line was changed from east to south.

This position better secured Wellington's line of retreat by the Ciudad-Rodrigo road, and also made it more possible for him to head off Marmont towards Miranda if he attempted to interfere with his movements along it. He now began his retirement to Ciudad-Rodrigo by passing his commissariat and baggage along the Ciudad-Rodrigo road ; and up to this time had acted entirely on the defensive.

Marmont, eager to prevent his escape, and observing the dust raised by his baggage column in the distance on the Ciudad-Rodrigo road, mistook his opponent's defensive attitude for a desire to avoid battle ; he was also completely ignorant of Wellington's exact position, which the wooded and undulating country concealed from him.\* Therefore, having taken some time in giving instructions to his columns, he pressed forward to threaten the Ciudad-Rodrigo road with his leading troops, consisting of Thomiere's division, with the light

\* As one stands on the high ground above Miranda, over which the French were moving when Packenham subsequently fell upon them, it seems as if from this rather dominant height Packenham's march should have been clearly seen ; but on descending to the lower ground, across which he must have moved, it is found to be so undulating in character that one comprehends how it was possible for him to traverse this rolling country unobserved—especially by keeping well down by the streams which flow on the reverse (or western) slope of the ridges.

cavalry, and flanked by 50 guns—this force constituting what may be termed the left wing of his army. He intended also, when Wellington moved to meet this advance, and when his own divisions, which were somewhat in rear, had closed up, to fall upon the Allies by the village of Arapiles, which he now attacked, and partially, though not entirely, succeeded in occupying.

But in thus pushing hastily forward he left a gap of some distance between his left and the remainder of his force, an error which Wellington, observing it from the hill of the English Arapiles, “fixed” (writes Napier) “with the stroke of a thunderbolt.”

Issuing orders to Packenham to attack the head of Thomiere’s division, he directed General Pack to assault the French Arapiles, in order to engage the enemy in that quarter, and bore down himself with the bulk of his troops upon Thomiere’s right flank.

Packenham carried out his orders with great quickness, and at about 5 o’clock, when Thomiere in confident security, was pressing forward on his march to cut off the Allies, he was himself enveloped in front and flank. Alison writes: “So rapid were the movements, so instantaneous the onset, that it appeared as if the spirit of a mighty wizard had transfused itself into the whole host.” \*

The French attempted gallantly to make face both to their front and right; but, taken by surprise, they were attacked at a complete disadvantage, and were quickly driven back. Clausel, coming up from

\* Alison’s *History of Europe* (Ed. 1848), vol. xx. p. 59.

## 263 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (2ND PERIOD)

July 22, 1812 the forest, endeavoured to restore the fight ; but when the French, some being in column some in squares some in line, were being torn by the volleys of the closing infantry and by the Allied guns, Le Marchant's heavy horsemen, with Anson's light cavalry on their flank, came swiftly down upon them, and “the next instant twelve hundred French infantry, though formed in several lines, were trampled down with a terrible clamour and disturbance.”\* The French left wing was entirely broken, more than 2,000 prisoners were taken, and Thomiere's division ceased to exist as a military body.

The destruction of Marmont's leading division practically decided the day, though the French made a very determined effort to retrieve the disaster.

A severe contest went on at the French Arapiles, and Pack's assault of this height was gallantly repulsed with loss, though later on the hill was at last occupied by the Allies.

Clausel—Marmont having been wounded—succeeded to the command of the French, and handled his troops with much ability ; so that, as day closed, they were enabled to draw off through the forest towards the ford of Alba on the Tormes, and thence by Valladolid on Burgos.

But Marmont could not have escaped a more complete and entire overthrow of his whole army, had it not been that Wellington, who was still in the belief that the fort at Alba was held by the Spaniards, followed with the bulk of his pursuing

\* Napier's *Peninsular War* (Ed. 1836), vol. v. p. 172.

force towards Huerta, while Clausel, knowing that July 22 this was not the case, withdrew mainly to the ford<sup>1812</sup> at Alba.

As it was, however, Salamanca was a brilliant victory for the Allies, and a crushing blow to the French; Marmont had, in the battle, entirely failed in his object of cutting off Wellington from the road to Ciudad-Rodrigo. The Allied loss was about 6,000; that of the French about 7,000, and 11 guns.

Several superior officers fell on both sides. Wellington himself was struck by a spent ball; General Le Marchant was killed; and Generals Beresford, Stapleton Cotton, Leith, Cole, and Alten of the Allies wounded; while of the French, Generals Ferey, Thomiere, and De Graviers were killed, and Marmont, Bonnet, Clausel, and Monnot wounded.

Two eagles, belonging to the 62nd and 22nd French Regiments, were taken by the 44th (now 1st Battalion Essex) Regiment and the 30th (1st Battalion East Lancashire) Regiment, and are now in the chapel of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea, and also six standards. For this victory Wellington was created Marquis of Wellington, and the Spanish Cortes invested him with the insignia of the Golden Fleece.

“Salamanca,” as a bar to the Peninsular medal and a battle-honour, commemorates the day.

In this battle Wellington—to use the expression of a French officer \*—practically “defeated 40,000 men in forty minutes.”

\* Napier's *Peninsular War*.

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July 22, 1812 In discussing the battle of Talavera we have already dwelt upon Wellington's quickness and decision in delivering his attack, or counterstroke, against the momentarily victorious French, which practically decided that battle in favour of the Allies. The rapidity with which, again, at Salamanca he passed at exactly the right moment from defence to attack and struck at Marmont, together with his skilful direction of Packenham's division, form the chief and characteristic features of this battle, and strikingly illustrate his ability as a tactician. Marmont's troops had been ordered to close up from the rear, and if the opportunity had not been seized on the instant it would soon have passed away.

But it was the preparation quietly and quickly made to head off Marmont, as soon as it had become clear that the French did not intend to move up the right bank of the Tormes, which enabled Wellington to carry out his attack with such effect when the opportunity offered.

In short, the order to Packenham, and the cavalry with him, to cross the Tormes and march towards Aldea Tejada, a movement effected unperceived under cover of the favourable features of the ground, contributed mainly to the decisive result of this day.

Towards the end of the battle Wellington was strongest here, as at Talavera, at the most important point, and the 6th Division, in reserve, coming up, put an end to all efforts of the French to restore the fight, and finally secured the hill of the French Arapiles.

M. Brialmont writes of this battle\*: “The July 22, battle of Salamanca was beyond all question the <sup>1812</sup> most decisive which the Allies had yet delivered in the Peninsula. It established the reputation of the English army, and brought especially into light the brilliant qualities of their general: a sound judgment; a *coup d'œil* prompt and unerring; a vigorous execution; and a rare ability in moving troops. Thibaudeau may well say that the battle of the Arapiles settled the question of the French occupation of Spain.”

Napier also considers that it will always be referred to as the most skilful of Wellington’s battles. Alluding to the campaign generally, and to the fact that Marmont gave his adversary a chance which he need not of course have done, he says: “The battle of Salamanca was accidental in itself; but the tree was planted to bear such fruit, and Wellington’s profound combinations must be estimated from the general result. . . . In former actions the French had been repulsed; here they were driven headlong, as it were, before a mighty wind, without help or stay, and the results were proportionate.”

After Salamanca, as the defeated French army, under Clausel, joined by cavalry reinforcements from the Army of the North, fell back, Wellington followed, reaching Valladolid on July 30th. On the morning after the battle a notable cavalry charge took place, in which the Heavy Brigade of

\* *History of the Life of Arthur Duke of Wellington.* Translated from the French of M. Brialmont (of the Belgian Army) by the Rev. G. R. Gleig, 1858.

## 267 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (2ND PERIOD)

July and Aug.  
1812 the King's German Legion and Anson's cavalry brigade, under the Hanoverian General Bock broke in succession three battalion squares of the French rearguard and made many prisoners. Wellington described this charge as "one of the most gallant he ever witnessed." The squares had not before been shaken by artillery.

At Valladolid Wellington captured several pieces of artillery and a quantity of stores, but from this point turned back and, marched against Joseph, who, two days after the battle (*i.e.* on July 24th) had arrived at Blasco Sancho from Madrid on his way with the Army of the Centre to join Marmont. Joseph retired in haste before Wellington to Madrid, and subsequently, abandoning the capital, fell back southwards through Toledo.

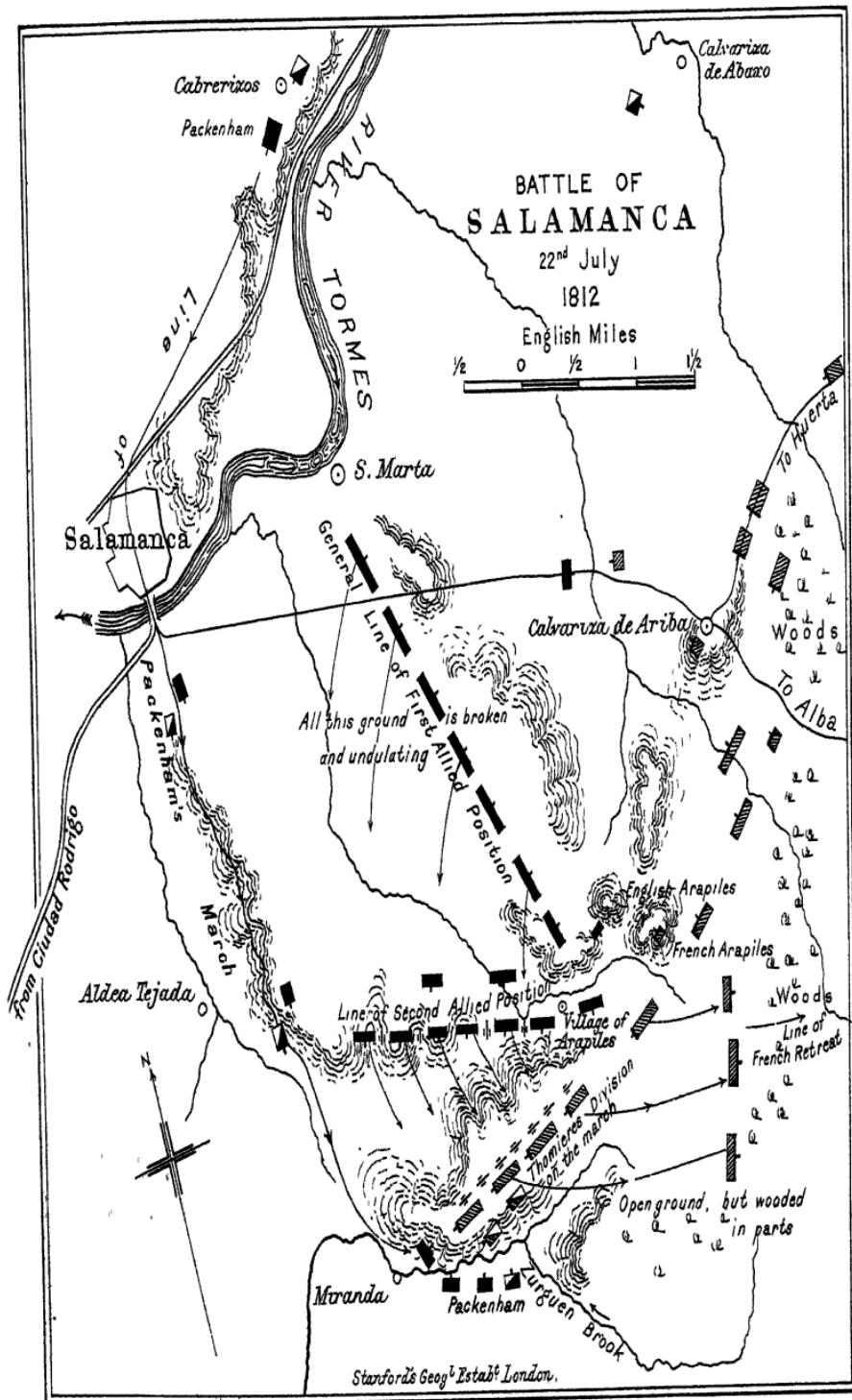
### ENTRY INTO MADRID

Wellington then entered Madrid in triumph, (August 12th, 1812), being received by the population with enthusiasm. A small French garrison of 1,700 men had been left in the Retiro, a fortress commanding Madrid, to which Wellington at once laid siege. On the night of the 13th the outer enceinte was captured, and preparations were being made to escalade the inner one when the fort capitulated, on August 14th.

In the Retiro were taken 180 cannon, 20,000 muskets, and a quantity of military stores. Also two eagles belonging to the 13th and 51st French Regiments, which now hang in the chapel of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea.









Soult, in consequence, *raised the siege of Cadiz* Aug. and (August 26th), destroying his entrenchments and <sup>Sept.</sup> 1812 500 cannon. He then *evacuated Andalusia*, moving to the aid of Joseph ; and Hill, thus freed from his watch over Badajoz and the Alemtejo, marched eastwards and took up a position covering Madrid on the south.

Had Wellington now commanded a larger army, better equipped ; and had he possessed more money and supplies, he would probably have retained permanently his triumphant position. As it was, the French armies beginning once more to collect from the north and south, he moved from Madrid, and, on September 1st, 1812, marched towards Valladolid, against the Army of the North, now (under Clausel) assembling on the Douro. Clausel retired before him ; and Wellington, pushing on, entered Burgos (September 18th) and laid siege to the castle there, the capture of which he looked upon as important for reasons which will be explained.

#### SIEGE OF THE CASTLE OF BURGOS

This siege was not successful. The defences of the castle were strong, the material at the disposal of Wellington for its reduction, and his means of transport were limited, and the resistance, including five successful sorties made by the French garrison of 2,000 men, was desperate. From all these causes combined five distinct assaults failed ; and at length, after a perseverance of thirty days, and having lost about 2,000 in killed and wounded, he was forced, as Soult, Joseph, and the Army of the

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Oct.  
1812

North were collecting and advancing upon him, to raise the siege. He then commenced on October 21st what is known as the Retreat from Burgos, the army moving off quietly after dark, the gun-wheels wrapped in straw, so that noise might not attract the fire of the castle.

### RETREAT FROM BURGOS

This retreat entailed unavoidable hardships upon the troops, though not such severe ones as those which had been endured during the retreat to Corunna under Sir John Moore, or by the French under Massena in 1811. The marches were not excessive, but as the roads were heavy with mud, and the weather at times exceedingly bad, much fatigue was undergone by men and animals ; the sick and wounded suffered extremely, and it was difficult to get the guns and baggage along. By want of staff and departmental arrangements more than anything else, there was at times an insufficiency of supplies and serious privation, but not with all corps.

The casualties in battle were not heavy, though there was often sharp fighting, and no guns or baggage had to be abandoned. Still, discipline became much relaxed towards the close, and the soldiers fell into the disorders of an army weakened in spirit by toil and retreat ; plunder—especially of spirits, wine, and food—intoxication, and as a result insubordination, becoming prevalent crimes. The military operations were, however, skilfully conducted by Wellington, and

the Allies, falling back, followed by the French, Oct. and retired over the Carrion near Palencia, and after-  
wards across the Douro towards Salamanca,  
blowing up the bridges. Hill (who upon Joseph's  
last advance had retreated through Madrid towards Arevalo) joined Wellington close to Salamanca ; and on November 18th, 1812, the Allies reached Ciudad-Rodrigo, and afterwards went into cantonments about the Coa and Agueda, the French again separating their armies to obtain supplies.

Nov.  
1812

In this retreat from Burgos the Allies lost about 7,000 men, of whom by far the greater number consisted of stragglers from the ranks who perished from their own carelessness or disobedience.

#### COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

In speaking of this campaign as a whole Napier remarks : “ Whatever failures there were, it will probably (not excepting that of Waterloo) be always considered as Wellington’s finest illustration of the art of war.”

The strategical operations between Marmont and Wellington, which commenced on July 15th, 1812, afford striking illustrations.

1st. Of one general endeavouring to seize his adversary’s line of communication—in other words his line of supplies—while the other manœuvres to defend it.

2nd. Of one general forcing another to form for battle in a position disadvantageous to him.

3rd. Of one general by brilliant tactics wresting

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from his opponent all the advantages which his skilful strategy had gained for him.

Marmont's line of communication lay through Valladolid towards Burgos, Wellington's along the road to Ciudad-Rodrigo, and the object of Marmont was to cut off Wellington from this road. The object of Wellington was to frustrate his design, but at the same time, if possible, to protect the town of Salamanca, which, if he lost, he would have to retake before assuming the offensive again in Spain.

When on July 19th, 1812, after the movements of the previous days, the two armies faced each other along the River Guarena, both covered their lines of supply, and Marmont had failed in his design.

On the 20th, however, when Marmont, by his rapid movement round Wellington's right had succeeded in turning it, and with his left reached the ford of Huerta, while Wellington was at Cabeza Velosa, the position was changed. "Wellington" (says Napier) "was deeply disquieted at the unexpected result of this day's operations, which had been entirely to the advantage of the French. Marmont had shown himself perfectly acquainted with the country; he had outflanked and outmarched the Allies, and gained the command of the Tormes."

It could then be seen that if, on the following day, Marmont continued his rapid march, he might reach a lower point than Wellington upon the Ciudad-Rodrigo road, and interpose on the latter's communications.

## COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN 272

From having gained the position he held, Marmont possessed great advantages over his adversary.

1st. If Wellington retreated towards Ciudad-Rodrigo, he (Marmont) would regain Salamanca, in addition to having the chance of being able to attack him favourably while on the march.

2nd. If Wellington remained covering Salamanca he was liable to be brought to battle in a position not completely covering his line of supplies, but in one nearly parallel to it (for instance, facing south-east). This is not an advantageous position for an army to fight in, because, if defeated and forced back, it will probably be driven off its line of supplies, and away from the depôts where it can procure fresh stores and food.

An army, on the other hand, which fights across its line of supplies, *i.e.* in a position completely covering it, is less likely, if defeated, to be dispersed and ruined by its defeat, as it will most probably be able to retire along that line, reorganize again, and once more take the field.

Marmont, therefore, had so manœuvred that when he was about to come into collision with the enemy he had gained a position of advantage. This is one of the chief objects of strategy.

It is, however, of no use to obtain an advantage unless it can be maintained sufficiently long to profit by it. On March 22nd, Marmont, in his eagerness to secure the Ciudad-Rodrigo road, gave Wellington a favourable chance to defeat him in battle, which he at once seized. Then all that Marmont had gained was thrown away. Thus it

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is not sufficient to merely obtain an advantage, but when obtained it must be held, in spite of the enemy.

It would be remarked by anybody considering these movements attentively, that Marmont, in pushing forward with his left towards the Ciudad-Rodrigo road, was laying open his own line of retreat through Valladolid; but this, under the actual circumstances of the case, he was able to do without anxiety.

1st. Because Wellington, if he moved to cut him off, would have to abandon the road to Ciudad-Rodrigo to him, which he was unlikely to do.

2nd. If he did cut him off, Marmont could still fall back upon Joseph, who was advancing from Madrid towards Blasco Sancho.

In this campaign the ford of Huerta and the ford and fort of Alba on the Tormes became points of strategical importance. The abandonment of the fort at Alba by the Spaniards illustrates, as did the abandonment of the pass of Baños in 1809, how much the plans of any leader may be interfered with by want of due support from others.

Wellington's reasons for the unsuccessful siege of the castle of Burgos should be understood.

The castle was of much strategical importance, because it guarded the French line of communication through Bayonne, and its capture would be a step towards establishing a new line of communication with the north coast of Spain and the fleet on



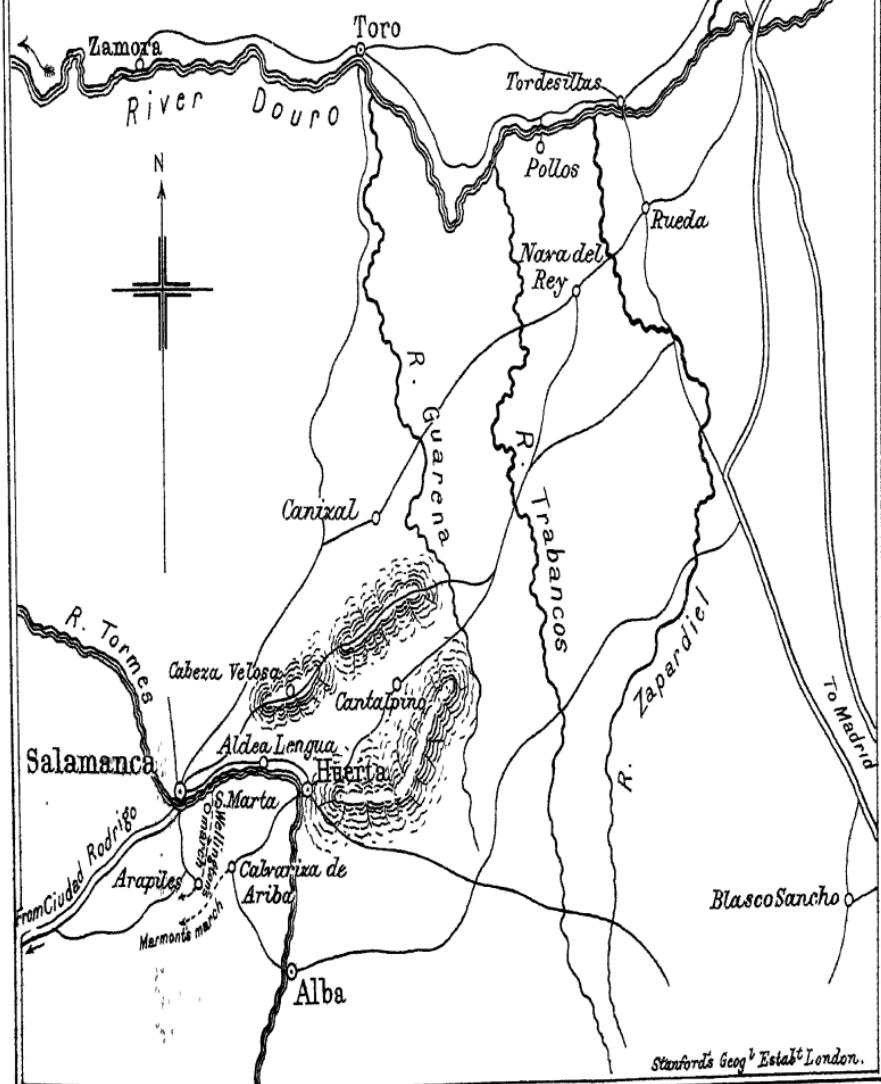


## CAMPAIGN OF SALAMANCA

Operations of  
MARMONT & WELLINGTON15<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> July

1812

Miles 0 5 10 20 Miles

Stanford's Geog<sup>t</sup> Estab<sup>r</sup> London.



that coast. Now that the French armies were becoming weaker, and the Allied army stronger, and it being unlikely (in consequence of the Russian War) that Napoleon would be able to send reinforcements into the Peninsula, it might be possible to strike at the French communications from the north, and interpose between their armies and France. This was not so at the opening of the war, on account of the enormous superiority in numbers possessed by the French.

Wellington has been criticised for not having taken heavier ordnance with him to the siege of Burgos, obtaining it at St. Ander or Madrid, but in connection with the siege, its failure, and the cause of this failure, he writes thus to Lord Bathurst in his despatches :—

“ *September 21st, 1812.*—I apprehend that the means I have are not sufficient to enable me to take the castle. I am informed, however, that the enemy are ill provided with water ; and that their magazines of provisions are in a place exposed to be set on fire. I think it possible, therefore, that I may have it in my power to force them to surrender, although I may not be able to lay the place open to assault.”

Again, to the same, on September 27th, 1812 : “ It is not easy to take a strong place well garrisoned, when one has not a sufficient quantity of cannon ; when one is obliged to save ammunition on account of the distance of our magazines ; and when one is desirous of saving the lives of soldiers.”

Again, on October 2nd, 1812, to Sir R. Hill : “ Although I have not given up all hopes, I am

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afraid we shall not succeed in taking this castle. It is very strong, well garrisoned, and well provided with artillery. I had only 3 guns \*; one of which was destroyed, and another much damaged, last night."

This shows that the strength of the castle, though it was not a first-class fortress, was found, on laying siege to it, to be greater than had been understood; also, why Wellington hoped nevertheless to capture it; and also, that there was certainly a deficiency of siege material available on the spot in more than one respect.

But the cause of this deficiency appears to have been mainly a want of transport, for on November 23rd, 1812, Wellington writes to Lord Liverpool: "I see that a disposition already exists to blame the Government for the failure of the siege of Burgos. The Government had nothing to say to the siege. It was entirely my own act. In regard to means, there were ample means both at Madrid and at St. Ander for the siege of the strongest fortress. That which was wanting at both places was means of transporting ordnance and military stores to the place where it was desirable to use them. The people of England, so happy as they are in every respect, so rich in resources of every description, having the use of such excellent roads, etc., will not readily believe that important results here frequently depend upon 50 or 60 mules, more or less; but the fact is so."

Then also there was a deficiency in trained

\* These were 18-pounders, and named by the soldiers "Thunder," "Lightning," and "Nelson." Two were soon disabled, and the third was used for a day or two with one trunnion only (MS. Journal of General Sir F. Robinson).

supervision ; and few of the troops had any experience of sieges. Napier mentions that out of four regular officers of the Royal Engineers employed at the siege, there was not one available at the third assault as guide to the direction to be followed, one having been killed, one badly wounded, one being sick, and the fourth required for the general conduct of the works.

Sir John Jones, in his *Journals of the Sieges in Spain in 1811-2*, alludes to there being at this time no corps of sappers and miners with the army, and a dearth of good entrenching tools, etc. ; and Brialmont, in his *Life of Wellington*, before quoted from, says : “Vauban himself, without tools, without cannon, without projectiles or sappers and miners, with an insufficient number of engineer officers and of soldiers trained to siege operations, could not have achieved any better results.”

Wellington blames himself, however, most of all for not taking with him his most experienced troops, having left these in Madrid, no doubt for the better security of the capital. He writes on November 23rd, 1812 : “The fault of which I was guilty in the expedition to Burgos was not that I undertook the operation with inadequate means, but that I took there the most inexperienced instead of the best troops. I left at Madrid the 3rd, 4th, and Light Divisions, who had been with myself always before.”

To sum all the above up, it seems that Wellington considered that, the possession of the castle being very important and there being a chance of taking it, he was bound to attempt its capture,

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though his means were inadequate ; but that the result had shown him that he could only have succeeded through the efforts of exceptionally experienced troops, such as those who had stormed Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz under the difficulties we have already described, and at heavy loss.

He is most careful to say both that the few directing officers of artillery and engineers he had with him did everything that was to be done with the means at their disposal, and also that those troops who failed in the assault to maintain the posts which they had gained, did so unavoidably. He writes in his despatch :—

“ The officers at the head of the artillery and engineer departments, Lieutenant-Colonel Robe and Lieutenant-Colonel Burgoyne, and Lieutenant-Colonel Dickson\* who commanded the reserve artillery, rendered me every assistance, and the failure of success is not to be attributed to them.

“ It is impossible to represent in adequate terms my sense of the conduct of the Guards and German Legion upon this occasion ” (*i.e.* at the last assault of the castle), “ and I am quite satisfied that if it had been possible to maintain the posts which they had gained with so much gallantry, those troops would have maintained them.”

But he adds (a remark which conveys its own lesson) that at one of the earlier assaults the officer commanding had not sufficiently followed his instructions or imparted these to others, so that, being

\* All afterwards distinguished officers. Colonel Sir William Robe, R.A., K.C.B. ; Field-Marshal Sir J. Burgoyne, Bart., R.E., G.C.B. ; Major-General Sir Alexander Dickson, R.A., G.C.B.

## COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN 278

killed when advancing with great gallantry, there was no one to see the orders duly carried out.

Possibly, though not of course certainly, the soldiers who had taken Ciudad-Rodrigo, or escaladed the castle and bastion of St. Vincente at Badajoz, and had gained much experience of siege work, might have succeeded also before Burgos; but what is brought out most prominently at this unsuccessful siege, and also at that of St. Sebastian in the following year, to which we shall allude further on, is the military advantages which are lost when an army is not fully equipped on entering upon a campaign in its transport and all other departments. But to ensure this requires much forethought and system. “War tries the military framework. It is in peace that the framework must be formed.” \*

What a difference this failure before a comparatively weak fortress made to the campaign may be seen by the fact that, had it not occurred, the misfortunes of the retreat from Burgos would almost certainly have been avoided.

More than this, if the castle of Burgos had been taken quickly, Madrid would in all probability have been held till the line of communications had been securely established past it with the northern coast of Spain, and the fleet on that coast. The whole course of the war would thus have been influenced, and the contest would doubtless have been more speedily terminated. This illustrates again the supreme value of time in war.

\* Napier's *Peninsular War*.

## 279 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (2ND PERIOD)

Napier writes \* : "If Burgos, a mean fortress of the lowest order, had fallen early the world would have seen a noble stroke." And Wellington, referring to the campaign, says † : "We should have retained still greater advantages, I think, and should have remained in possession of Castile and Madrid during the winter, if I could have taken Burgos, as I ought, early in October."

Then a division of the army with the Galicians in the north, aided by reinforcements and arms from England, could have kept Portugal safe from invasion north of the Tagus, and roused a general insurrection throughout the northern provinces. Napoleon, involved in the disasters of the Russian campaign, could have sent no aid, and Wellington, with 60,000 British and Portuguese on the Tagus, and the Spaniards in the southern provinces, "would have delivered such a battle to the united French armies, if indeed they could have united, as would have shaken all Europe with its martial clangour." ‡

But this was not to take place ; and instead, Wellington, writing to Earl Bathurst on October 31st, 1812, says : "I think I have escaped from the worst military situation I was ever in."

With regard to the retreat itself, in discussing the retreat of Sir John Moore in 1809, and that of Massena in 1810, we have already alluded to the evils incident to all retreats when long con-

\* Napier's *Peninsular War* (Ed. 1836), vol. v. p. 362.

† Despatch to the Earl of Liverpool, November 23rd, 1812.

‡ Napier's *Peninsular War*.

tinued, and therefore the necessity of officers on these occasions continually exerting themselves to keep up the spirits of their men and maintain discipline ; but this retreat from Burgos brings out in stronger light than perhaps any other how greatly the “moral” of a force becomes shaken by fatigue, failure, and falling back before the enemy, because, as has been said before, it was conducted under comparatively favourable circumstances. Though there was certainly hardship and privation, producing discontent, it is stated that the confidence of the army in Wellington as their leader was in no sense shaken. But, notwithstanding, the discipline of the army became relaxed to such a degree that Wellington considered it necessary to comment upon it in most severe terms in a communication addressed to general officers, in which he said : “I am concerned to observe that the army under my command has fallen off in this respect (discipline) in the late campaign to a greater degree than any army with which I have ever been, or of which I have ever read.”

This censure was much resented at the time as being too sweeping, and no doubt it was not applicable to all regiments ; but it may be accepted that it was largely called for, and it marks the extent to which the retreat had affected the troops.

But though the evacuation of Madrid with the retreat from Burgos somewhat dimmed the lustre of the previous triumphs of this year, and in

## 281 CAMPAIGN OF 1812 (2ND PERIOD)

Wellington's own words formed "a material deterioration of the campaign," the latter had been nevertheless a brilliant one, and is generally regarded as one of the most brilliant of the war.

Its results are thus summed up by Wellington himself in his despatch to Lord Liverpool from Ciudad-Rodrigo on November 23rd, 1812 :—

" From what I see in the newspapers I am much afraid that the public will be disappointed at the result of the last campaign, notwithstanding that it is in fact the most successful campaign in all its circumstances, and has produced for the cause more important results than any campaign in which a British army has been engaged for the last century. We have taken by siege Ciudad-Rodrigo, Badajoz, and Salamanca, and the Retiro surrendered. . . .

" In the months elapsed since January the army has sent to England little short of 20,000 prisoners, and they have taken and destroyed, or have themselves the use of, the enemy's arsenals in Ciudad-Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca, Valladolid, Astorga, Seville, the lines before Cadiz, etc., and upon the whole we have taken or destroyed, or we now possess, little short of 3,000 pieces of cannon ; the siege of Cadiz has been raised, and all the countries south of the Tagus have been cleared of the enemy."

In this summary Wellington does not allude specially to the important battle of Salamanca, and the occupation of Madrid, the Spanish capital, probably because he had in previous despatches already done so ; but the complete

defeat of Marmont, and the moral results attending, the expulsion of the French from Madrid, constituted most solid advantages for the Allied cause.

During the winter of 1812 the departments of the Army were in several respects, though hardly in all, put upon a more thorough footing of efficiency in anticipation of the operations to be conducted in the ensuing year.

## CHAPTER XII

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### CAMPAIGN IN SPAIN, 1813 \*

VITTORIA—BATTLES OF THE PYRENEES—CAPTURE OF ST. SEBASTIAN—PASSAGE OF THE BIDASSOA—FALL OF PAMPELUNA

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THIS campaign was eminently “strategical” in its character, and may be said to have been the crowning one of the war.

It had been felt by England, after the operations of 1812, that the moment had arrived when a great effort made for the complete expulsion of the French from the Peninsula would meet with success; and so, during the time that the army remained in cantonments (*i.e.* throughout the winter of 1812–13), preparations on a larger scale were made for enabling the Allied army to assume the offensive in the most efficient condition, in the ensuing spring. Fresh Portuguese battalions were raised; reinforcements of every description sent from England; and the departments of the army so organized that they were more completely ready for active service in the field. The Spaniards

\* Upon several points in connection with this campaign and that of 1812, I have derived much assistance from the lectures delivered to the gentlemen cadets of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, some years ago, by Colonel (then Captain) H. G. MacGregor, C.B., who visited with me many of the battlefields of Spain and France.

also collected together into armies, and the May, guerillas became very active throughout the country. Thus the Allied forces were, in May, 1813, more perfect as an Army than they had ever been before, and had also that moral strength which a now thoroughly well justified confidence in themselves, and faith in their leader, necessarily gave to them. Obliged as the French were to scatter over the country to obtain subsistence, they were greatly harassed by the guerilla bands ; Napoleon, having been worsted in the campaign against Russia, had withdrawn many of his troops from the Peninsula ; and the French leaders in Spain saw that they could expect no reinforcements from France. To add to this they were suffering under a disheartening series of defeats in the field, and felt no confidence in their leader, Joseph.

Scattered over Spain, the Anglo-Portuguese troops, with the Spanish forces and auxiliaries, amounted to about 190,000 men ; while nearly the same number of French were present with the eagles, including the reserves at Bayonne. When the campaign opened the position and strength of the contending armies with which we have to deal in this campaign may be set down as follows :—

The Anglo-Portuguese army, about 75,000 strong, of whom 44,000 were British, with 6,000 cavalry and 90 guns, were in cantonments about the Coa ; the right under Hill extending towards the pass of Baños, and the left near Lamego.

A large Spanish force, including some irregular mountain bands, under the chief command of

May,  
1813

Castaños, numbering several thousands, was in Galicia and the Asturias, etc., and part of it joined Wellington, who now had been appointed generalissimo of all the Spanish forces, and held independent command of the whole Allied army.

The French army, under the nominal command of Joseph, about 60,000 in Castille, Leon, and the central provinces.

Their left stretched in a disjointed manner from Toledo and Madrid across behind the Tormes to beyond Salamanca; their centre maintained the line of the Douro, defensive works having been raised along that river; and the right was behind the River Esla.

Other forces, both of the French and Allies, occupied the provinces of Biscay, Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, etc., though these did not bear the brunt of the campaign, and French troops guarded as usual the line of communication through Burgos to Bayonne. The Allies now throughout the Peninsula (for the first time in the war), pretty nearly balanced the French as regards strength, but were more concentrated; and those troops immediately to be engaged under Wellington and Joseph were nearly equal in numbers, the latter being superior in artillery.

Joseph's troops had Valladolid given to them for their point of assembly, if attacked; and their main object was to defend to the last the line of the Douro, on which about 35,000 men and 100 guns could be concentrated, it being expected that Wellington would move, as in the previous cam-

paign, upon Salamanca, and thence attack the May,  
French position along that river. 1813

Now the rugged country about the Rivers Sabor and Tua, which lies within the frontier of Portugal, and approaches the right bank of the Douro, was known to be most difficult of passage, and any movement of the Allies through it was not anticipated as either probable or possible by the French, who were ignorant that Wellington had so far improved the navigation of the Douro as to be able to bring boats with quickness up to where his left rested on that river, and thus be able to cross it, without any difficulty or delay sufficient to give them warning.

Wellington, having carefully examined this district of country, was of opinion that by great exertions he could get his artillery and supplies over it. He knew also that he would not be expected in this quarter, and so he determined to endeavour to advance through it, join with the Spanish army in Galicia, and thus turn the French line of defence upon the Douro, the strength of which in front was very formidable.

To carry out this plan of campaign, the Allied army moved forward about the middle of May, in three separate columns.

The left, 40,000, under Sir Thomas Graham (forming the main force), was entrusted with the effort to turn the French line upon the Douro ; and crossing that river between Lamego and the Spanish frontier, advanced northwards through

May to  
June,  
1813

Braganza and other points, performing successfully a most laborious march. They then formed a junction with the Galicians, and, turning eastwards, pushed towards Zamora and the line of the Esla.

When Graham was sufficiently forward upon his march, Wellington, commanding the centre in person, advanced upon the direct road to Salamanca; and Hill, with the right, crossing the Tormes higher up that river, also marched towards Salamanca.

These movements of Wellington completely deceived the enemy. Joseph and the French leaders never suspected that the Allies were moving against their right, and imagining that Wellington and Hill were coming upon them in force from the south, fell back, after a feeble resistance, to their defensive line behind the Douro.

Graham's troops now began to arrive upon the right bank of the Esla; effected the passage over it with difficulty at certain fords, the infantry at first holding on to the stirrups of the cavalry; and by their unexpected appearance across the river struck dismay into the French, who, afraid of being surrounded and enclosed, retired precipitately, destroying the bridges over the Douro, and abandoning all their works.

By the 3rd of June the whole of the Allied columns united at Toro; and Joseph had begun to concentrate his scattered army behind the River Pisuerga, from Valladolid northwards.

Thus the first step in this campaign had been successfully accomplished by the Allies, and the *strong French line upon the River Douro was turned.*

In carrying this out, infantry (with pontoons), May to cavalry, and artillery, had traversed a country <sup>June,</sup> <sub>1813</sub> deemed impracticable for Infantry alone, and some of the columns marched 150, others 250, miles.

The Allies, who now—by the junction of the Galicians—were raised to a total of 90,000 men, advanced to the Pisuerga, while Joseph, receiving an unfavourable report from the chief of his staff of the condition of the works at Burgos, and having been unable as yet to bring into line his troops in Biscay and Aragon, fell back still further *behind the line of the Ebro*. Some of his troops remained near Burgos; but upon the left of the Allies being pushed forward across the upper Pisuerga, and a direct advance being also made upon the town of Burgos, they *blew up the castle there and withdrew*.

The position which Joseph had now taken up behind the Ebro was by nature a very strong one. The river itself formed a good line of defence, while the road leading to it from Burgos passed through confined mountain gorges; one of which especially—the defile of Pancorbo \*—held by the French and defended by a small castle, was so narrow that a mere handful of men could have held it against a large force.

To have attacked this position in front would have entailed great loss upon the Allies, and the result must have been very doubtful.

\* This wild rocky defile appears in parts, as one passes through it, to be scarcely more than 100 feet wide, and is closed in by bare and rugged heights.

June,  
1813

Wellington, therefore, again determined to *turn* it if possible ; and, with a view to this movement, made a careful reconnaissance of the country north-west of Miranda, and towards the upper Ebro. This district was very mountainous and rocky, and it was supposed that no road existed across it practicable for guns ; but, as in the case of his former resolve with regard to the north-east corner of Portugal, Wellington decided to attempt the passage of it, especially as the difficulty of the operation was likely to prevent its being suspected, and moreover, the results, if it succeeded, would probably be of great value to the Allies.

The Allied army now moved northward, with the object of crossing the Ebro near its source about Rocamunda and Puente Arenas, and so coming down along the left bank upon the position of the French, near Vittoria.

Great and constant difficulties had to be overcome, but these were met and conquered successfully.

“ Neither ” (writes Napier) “ the winter gullies, nor the ravines, nor the precipitate passes amongst the rocks retarded even the march of the artillery. Where horses could not draw men hauled ; when the wheels would not roll, the guns were let down or lifted up with ropes—six days they toiled unceasingly, and on the seventh ” (*i.e.* June 20th) “ they burst like raging streams from every defile, and went foaming into the basin of Vittoria.”

On the above date (June 20th, 1813) the Allies, having turned the Ebro, encamped along the River

Bayas. Here they halted throughout that day to concentrate their forces, being now close upon Joseph, who had collected his army to meet them along the little River Zadorra, covering the town of Vittoria.

June,  
1813

Wellington had now, by the direction of his line of march, interposed his army between the enemy and St. Ander; this port, as well as others on the northern coast, had been evacuated by the French; English vessels entered it, and thus a free communication with the sea upon that coast was secured.

Advancing against Joseph on June 21st, Wellington attacked him in his position, the chief object of the attack being to force the enemy's right, and *cut the French off from the Bayonne road*—their main line of communication with France.

This brought on the

#### BATTLE OF VITTORIA

*June 21st, 1813*

(See plan facing page 305)

The Allies actually engaged in this battle numbered about 70,000,\* of whom 60,000 were Anglo-Portuguese troops, and the remainder Spanish. They had 90 guns.

The French numbered between 60,000 and 70,000, with 150 guns.

The French position along the River Zadorra was almost in prolongation of the road from Vittoria towards Bayonne. Their left under General Gazan rested on the heights of Puebla, which overlook the

\* Exclusive of a Spanish corps under Giron, 12,000 strong, not actually on the field, but coming up from Orduna.

June 21, 1813, village of Puebla de Arganzon and also the pass of Puebla, through which runs the road from Miranda to Vittoria. Thence the line extended in front of the village of Arinez to the Zadorra near Margarita, crossing the Miranda-Vittoria road. The high ground near Margarita formed the right of that portion of the force usually spoken of as the French "left," though in reality it was near the centre of the whole line.

An advanced post and some guns were thrown forward to a spur close to the bank of the Zadorra, where the river forms a loop between Villodas and Tres Puentes.

A second line, under D'Erlon, supported Gazan's right, occupying the ground between Arinez and Hermandad.

The right, under Reille, was drawn up to the north of Vittoria for the defence of the passage of the Zadorra from the direction of the Bilbao road. The villages and bridges of Abechuco and Gamarra Mayor were strongly held, and the heights to the north of them, on the right bank of the river, were also occupied.

A reserve of the King's Guards was at Gomecha, east of Arinez. A mass of cavalry, posted near Ali, was the link which connected the right with the left; and the baggage and incumbrances of the army, comprising an immense number of wheeled vehicles of every description, were parked to the east of Vittoria in the angle between the roads to Bayonne and Pampeluna, blocking up greatly the ground in the vicinity of Vittoria.

The River Zadorra varied very much in width <sup>June 21,</sup> and depth. At points of its course it was fordable, at others deep and running between perpendicular banks—for instance, near Tres Puentes, where it was about 150 feet broad.

Opposite the position held by Gazan and D'Erlon there were substantial stone bridges across it, none of which had been destroyed—viz. (beginning from the French left) at Puebla de Arganzon, Nanclares, Villodas, Tres Puentes, and Mendoza.

Near the Bilbao road, watched by Reille, there were the bridges of Gamarra Mayor and Abechuco already alluded to.

Fifty French guns placed at various points of the position commanded the bridges.

Wellington, having reconnoitred the above position, formed his army for the purpose of attacking it into four columns—viz. the right, the right centre, the left centre, and the left.\*

### *The Right Column*

About 20,000 strong, under Hill, was composed of the 2nd Division, a Portuguese division, part of a Spanish division (under Morillo), and a force of cavalry.

It was to move across the Zadorra by Puebla de Arganzon, endeavour to gain the heights of Puebla, and force the Puebla Pass.

\* See instructions for the movements of the army on June 21st, 1813, *Wellington's Despatches* (Ed. 1852), vol. vi. p. 536.

June 21,  
1813

### *The Right and Left Centre Columns*

About 30,000 in all, were both under Wellington's personal command.

The former was composed of the Light and 4th Divisions, the reserve artillery, and a force of cavalry. It was to move by Subijana de Morillos (on the Bayas) to Nanclares, and there await instructions.

The latter was composed of the 3rd and 7th Divisions. It was to move by Anda on the Bayas to Gueta, and thence towards the Zadorra, connecting itself with the right centre column.

### *The Left Column*

About 20,000, under Graham, was composed of the 1st and 5th Divisions, some Portuguese infantry, and Longa's Spaniards.

It was to move from Murguia, near the Bayas, by the Bilbao road, the Spaniards in advance, to the bridges north of Vittoria, connecting with the left centre column, by which it was to regulate its march.

In addition to the troops composing the above columns a Spanish corps, about 12,000, under Giron, was on the march from Orduna towards Murguia, as a reserve to the left column. It may be said here that it made strenuous efforts to reach the battlefield in time to take part in the conflict, but could not do so.

All communications for the Commander-in-Chief

were to be sent to the right centre column, and all baggage was to be kept well in rear of the army.

The left column had an important and difficult part to play in the operations. Graham, who commanded it, was instructed to regulate his movements in accordance with the progress made by the columns on his right ; and, at the same time, to be prepared to turn the French right and the town of Vittoria, if required to do so. Should he see that the Allied columns on his right were not gaining ground he was immediately to co-operate with them ; but should he observe, on the other hand, that they were driving the French back, he was then to turn his whole attention towards cutting off the retreat of the enemy by the Bayonne road.

Thus he had to act with caution and reserve until the certain success of the other columns, or further instructions from Wellington, clearly determined the line he was finally to follow.

On the morning of the 21st the movements of the army, according to the above instructions, were carried out with admirable precision.

About 10 o'clock Graham's guns upon the left were heard upon the Bilbao road drawing the enemy's attention to that quarter ; but his part being to regulate his advance by the columns on his right, which had very broken ground to pass through, he moved slowly, so that it was about 12 o'clock before his attack seriously developed. Hill, also at 10 o'clock as nearly as possible, passed the village of Puebla de Arganzon, and

June 21, Morillo's Spaniards, branching off, commenced to ascend the Puebla heights. Fortunately these were at first but weakly held, and Morillo had half mounted them before he met with any very serious resistance.

Then reinforcements came up on either side, and a determined contest for the possession of this commanding ground ensued, terminating finally in favour of the Allies. Hill's right on the low ground being now connected with the troops on the heights, his main body pushed boldly through the Puebla Pass, and carried the village of Subijana de Alava, on the French side of it.

Gazan, bringing up 30 guns, then attempted to retake the village; but failed, and Hill, though he had sustained considerable loss, held his position.

It was now between 12 and 1 o'clock.

In the meantime the right centre column, about 10 o'clock, had approached the Zadorra between Nanclares and Villodas, where it was halted until the left centre column got closer to the river in the direction of Mendoza, and the right under Hill was further advanced. At this moment, Wellington riding forward to the Zadorra near Villodas, some of the French crossed the river and fired on his staff. They were at once driven back, and shortly after this, a peasant having brought information that the bridge of Tres Puentes higher up, had been left unguarded, a brigade of the Light Division was sent immediately to secure it.

From the nature of the ground this brigade was able to reach the bridge unobserved, and doubling across it to the left bank, got behind the French advanced post in the loop of the river, their skirmishers picking off the gunners on the hill, while the 15th Hussars dashed at a gallop over the narrow bridge, crossing it one by one.

The Allies, once across the Zadorra at Tres Puentes, were quickly reinforced by Wellington, and Joseph now became anxious for the safety of the left portion of his force, for it was possible that the Allies from Margarita and Hermandad might interpose between it and the right under Reille. Upon the left, also, Gazan was being pressed by Hill; so, in fear of D'Erlon and Gazan being isolated and possibly cut off from Vittoria, he directed them to yield the high ground in front of Arinez. Under cover of 50 guns the French then retired to a second position close to where the reserve was posted, near Gomecha (occupying also the village of Arinez), and there made a great effort to restore the battle.

But it was too late. Soon three of Wellington's divisions with many guns and the heavy cavalry were across the Zadorra by bridges between Villodas and Mendoza, or by fords; and after heavy fighting, Margarita, Hermandad, and Arinez were all in possession of the Allies.

Gazan's extreme left was now being turned by Hill, and he was also in danger of being cut off from the road between Arinez and Vittoria; but the ground bordering this road was unfavourable for the action of the Allied cavalry, being interspersed

June 21, 1813, with copses, rocks, vineyards, and streams, so that the French succeeded in falling back, though in some confusion, still further towards Vittoria.

To now continue Graham's movements :—

On the Allied left, the high ground north of Vittoria was turned with comparative ease by Longa's Spaniards, who seized the village of Gamarra Menor, close to the Zadorra (higher up than Gamarra Mayor), and pushed across the river to the Bayonne road.

But the villages and bridges of Abechuco and Gamarra Mayor were held by Reille with great determination. The position he occupied was a strong one. *Têtes-de-pont* covered the bridges, and these were also commanded from the high ground on the left bank, where, between the river and Ariaga, the road to Vittoria runs along an elevated narrow causeway, over which it would have been most difficult to force a passage.

At Gamarra Mayor and Abechuco some desperate fighting took place; the bridges were more than once taken by Graham and retaken by Reille, and the villages were only carried and held after a hard contest. The loss of the Allies at this part of the field was very severe, the French obstinately maintaining the two bridges though they had twice been driven back from that of Gamarra Mayor.

Graham had established himself in the villages, and from his position there threatened the French in flank should they take the Bayonne road; but he could not (as Wellington states in his despatch

as to the battle) cross the bridges in face of the June 21, French until the Allied centre and right had<sup>1813</sup> forced the enemy further back through Vittoria; so he now paused, acting entirely in conformity with the spirit of the following instructions from Wellington, dated 2 p.m., and which probably reached him before 3 o'clock:—

“If the enemy appears to be strong and persevering, it would not appear expedient to undertake any manœuvre which would separate the left column too much from the centre. If, on the contrary, the enemy appears decidedly in retreat, Sir T. Graham’s movements should be directed in whatever manner will enable the army to reap the most effectual advantages from its success. Pray send frequent reports, and keep up a sure communication with the other columns on your right.”

Reille, when Graham received Wellington’s orders about 3 p.m., still held a strong position at the bridges, and the French left, retiring slowly towards Ali and Armentia, was coming closer towards him.

To turn again to the Allied centre and right columns:—

Having taken Hermandad and Arinez, a brigade of the Allied centre was pushed up the left bank of the Zadorra to aid Graham, while the remainder, with the right under Hill, followed D’Erlon and Gazan, who, after a running fight and losing several guns, succeeded in making a final stand at 6 p.m., about a mile to the west of Vittoria,

June 21, on the high ground between Armentia and Ali.  
1813 Here their right almost connected with Reille,  
near Ariaga.

Napier, describing this final stand, says : " Behind them was the plain in which the city " (of Vittoria) " stood ; and beyond the houses thousands of carriages, animals, and non-combatants, men, women and children, were huddling together in all the madness of terror ; and as the English shot went booming overhead the vast crowd started and swerved with a convulsive movement, while a dull and horrid sound of distress arose ; but there was no hope, no stay, for army or multitude. It was the wreck of a nation."

The French fought gallantly to maintain this last position covering Vittoria, but in the end, after a heavy cannonade and hard fighting, were driven off the heights ; and then, abandoning all attempts to fall back towards Bayonne, and leaving their artillery and baggage on the field, they fled along the Pampeluna road, the Allied light cavalry pushing on through Vittoria.

Reille was placed in great danger by the retreat of the French left, but after having made a most gallant defence of the bridges, he drew off as he observed the Allies from Hermandad approaching his left, and fell back with much skill and coolness through Betonio to join Joseph along the Pampeluna road. That he succeeded in doing this is greatly to his credit as a soldier, for the Allies were now closing upon him from Ariaga and Vittoria, and also from up the river at Durana.

Directly Reille gave way, Graham, crossing the <sup>June 21,</sup> Zadorra, joined in the pursuit ; and now Joseph's <sup>1813</sup> whole army was driven in complete disorder from the battlefield. The Allies occupied Vittoria, continuing the pursuit for six miles beyond the town, when night put a stop to it. One hundred and fifty-one guns, a number of mules, waggons, and equipages of all descriptions, a quantity of ammunition, warlike stores, and provisions, a million sterling in money, a stand of colours, the baton of Field-Marshal Jourdan, and various other trophies fell into the hands of the Allies, while King Joseph himself only escaped capture by riding off on a dragoon's horse, just as a squadron of cavalry, charging through his escort, captured his carriage.

The Allied loss in men in this battle was over 5,000, out of whom about 1,600 were Portuguese and Spaniards. That of the French was about 6,000.

Wellington, in his despatch of June 22nd, 1813, highly extols the conduct of the troops generally, and says specially : "The artillery was most judiciously placed by Lieutenant-Colonel Dickson, and the army is particularly indebted to that corps."

"Vittoria," as a clasp to the Peninsular medal and battle-honour, commemorates the victory.

The main points to be noticed in the battle of Vittoria are perhaps these :—

1st. That Wellington, by the direction of attack, compelled Joseph, if he remained to accept

June 21  
1813 battle at all on the Zadorra, to do so in a bad position ; because it was one which very imperfectly protected his line of communication with Bayonne. Directly the Allies could turn his right they could seize the Bayonne road.

2nd. The precision and concert with which Wellington's four columns, separated as they were by a close country, rendering communication difficult, kept touch with each other on the march from the Bayas to the Zadorra.

It is no easy operation for a large army, divided into several columns, each consisting of more than one arm, and having various distances and rough country to traverse, to reach an ordered destination at exactly the right moment. When this is accomplished so nearly as in this case (and we may say also as we have recently seen it on a larger scale with the movements of the Japanese armies in Manchuria) it indicates that leaders, staff, and regimental officers, have all from practice and experience thoroughly learnt that art of moving in co-operation which must be acquired before a large force can put forth its full powers.

So well timed was the Allied advance, that as Graham's guns were heard upon the left, Hill entered into action on the right, and it is a point of dispute \* whether the battle was first opened by Hill or by the right centre column near Villodas, after the French had fired upon Wellington's staff. The left centre column was somewhat behind, owing to the difficult ground it had to traverse.

\* *History of the Rifle Brigade*, by Sir W. Cope, 1877.

This illustrates the efficiency which Wellington's army had by this period of the war attained, and another proof of it is found in the excellent service rendered by the Spanish regiments in this battle. Both Morillo's troops on the right and Longa's on the left carried out difficult movements boldly and skilfully, and were highly spoken of by both Sir R. Hill and Sir T. Graham.

Everything on Wellington's part was so ably carried out, and the result so complete, that criticism of the Allied operations has been practically confined to a few points.

One is that the cavalry should have been more used, and that, had it been so, Gazan, after Arinez had been taken, would have been unable to reach the Pampeluna road. Another, that had Graham advanced quicker, and crossed the Zadorra sooner, he would have met with less resistance from Reille at the villages and bridges, and could have cut the French off from the Pampeluna, as well as from the Bayonne, road.

The first point is answered by Wellington's statement in his despatch as to the battle, that "the nature of the ground did not allow of the cavalry being generally engaged." But, apart from this, it was not his usual practice to tire out his cavalry in partial operations and charges over difficult country, when shortly afterwards it might be required for the final pursuit, and other important work.

With respect to Graham, what we have already said as to Wellington's instructions to him shows

June 21, that he strictly conformed to them, and carried  
1813 them out extremely well.

It can be clearly seen that, had he crossed the Zadorra between the receipt of Wellington's orders (sent at 2 p.m.) and the time (after 6 p.m.) when the French abandoned their final position between Armentia and Ali, he might have had the whole French army between him and the Allied column on his right. How, then, could he have kept in touch with this column, as ordered by Wellington, and assisted it if necessary? Besides, his loss in forcing the bridges would certainly have been heavy.

The defeat, as it was, could scarcely have been more thorough. When Joseph was cut off from the Bayonne road, abandoning guns and baggage, it was not an army that escaped towards Pampluna and the mountains of the Pyrenees, but merely the wreck of one.

The French, in the words of General Gazan, "lost all their equipages, all their guns, all their treasure, all their papers, so that no man could prove even how much pay was due to him; generals and subordinate officers alike were reduced to the clothes on their backs, and most of them were barefooted."

It has been contended, perhaps soundly, that Joseph should have declined to accept battle at all on the Zadorra, and fallen back to a better position along the high road to Bayonne.

Next, that having resolved to fight, he should have destroyed the bridges over the river in his

front; held the pass of Puebla in greater strength <sup>June 21,</sup> upon his left; and not have separated his right <sup>1813</sup> from his centre by so great an interval.

Possibly the true explanation of Joseph's action is that Wellington's movements completely perplexed him. They were extended over a wide area, at any point of which he might develop his main attack. Wellington, in short, held the initiative, and Joseph's plan, as far as he had any formed one, was probably adopted in great haste, and confined to holding the passages of the Zadorra, while awaiting events. The bridges may not have been destroyed either because the time available was occupied by other pressing matters, or because it was hoped that in the battle they might afford the means of crossing the river and attacking Wellington's columns to advantage.

It must be remembered that Joseph was unfortunately situated. Without any special military talent, he had been placed by Napoleon, for reasons of state, in the command he held. He was surrounded by counsellors divided in their views and jealous of each other; and probably felt that he would be condemned by the French Emperor should he fall back before Wellington without fighting.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that his plans were imperfect, and his action hesitating.

The surprise of the bridge of Tres Puentes had an important influence on the battle. The

June 21, 1813, Zadorra at this point is of some depth and runs between banks, steep on the side the French held, and on that of the Allies fringed with rocks and bordered by a close country.

It is more easy to understand on the ground itself, than from any map, how the brigade of the Light Division was able to reach this bridge unperceived by the enemy. The commanding hill in the loop of the river close to it, and on which the French advanced post was placed, is covered with rock and scrub to the edge. Therefore, from a little distance back upon it, not much can be seen, while the rocky ground on the Allied bank would much screen an advance behind it from observation.

The French were probably not pushed out to the very edge of the hill, but retired a little in order to conceal their position, and an effort to cross at this point, under their guns, was scarcely to be anticipated. Their attention, too (we are told), was directed towards their own left away from the bridge, where Wellington's columns had appeared, and where they were being hard pressed by Hill.\*

For the victory of Vittoria illuminations and public rejoicings were general in every town and village throughout England; Wellington was promoted in the British Army to the rank of Field-Marshal, and created Duke of Vittoria by Spain.

\* This surprise of the bridge at Tres Puentes, the passage of the Douro in 1809, and the surprise of Majuba Hill by the Boers in 1881, are all illustrations of how any position, not closely watched, may be unexpectedly carried by an enterprising enemy, no matter how strong it may naturally be, or how improbable an attempt to capture it may appear.



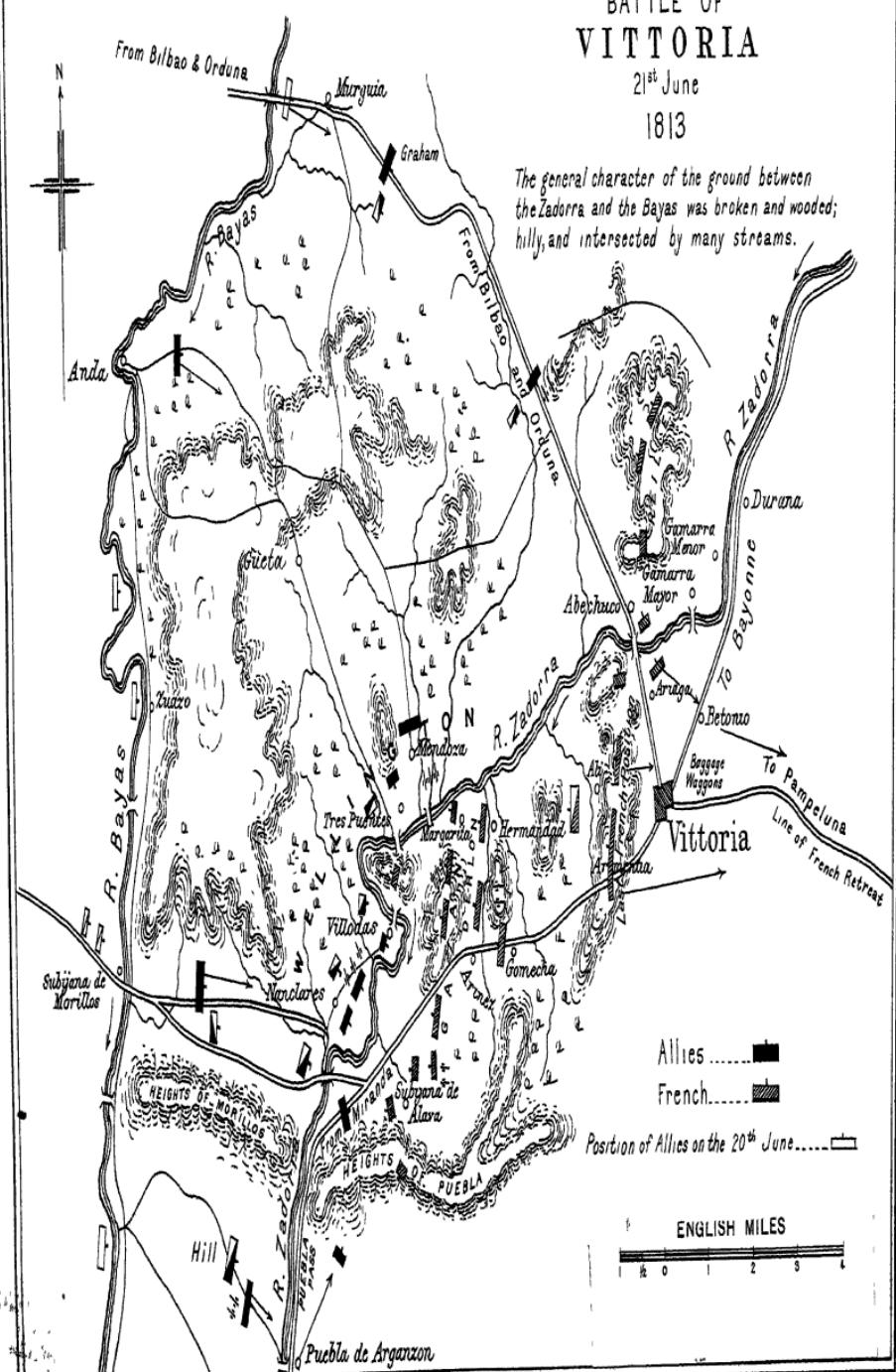


# BATTLE OF VITTORIA

21<sup>st</sup> June

1813

The general character of the ground between  
the Zadorra and the Bayas was broken and wooded,  
hilly, and intersected by many streams.



Allies.....

French.....

Position of Allies on the 20<sup>th</sup> June.....

ENGLISH MILES



The war *in the Peninsula* was now virtually concluded in favour of the Allies, though some serious battles had yet to be fought before its termination. Madrid was evacuated by the French, and their hold on Spain reduced to Santona,\* the strongholds of St. Sebastian and Pampeluna, and to some posts in Catalonia and Valencia.

We have mentioned that, before the battle of Vittoria, Joseph was endeavouring to collect his forces from every direction in order to meet Wellington, and after the battle some of these, followed by the British, narrowly escaped from being cut off from France.

Graham was directed against General Foy, who, coming from Bilbao, made a short stand at Tolosa, and subsequently retired over the Pyrenees to Irun, on the Bidassoa, throwing some men into St. Sebastian to strengthen that garrison.

Three British divisions were marched towards Tudela to try and intercept a French force under Clausel, which had approached Vittoria from Logrono: but Clausel escaped from these; fell back through Saragossa; and, sacrificing his artillery, crossed the Pyrenees into France.

Joseph, with the main body of the French, reached Pampeluna in great disorder on June 24th, 1813. Then, leaving a garrison and some provisions in Pampeluna, he retired, hard pressed by the Allies, over the Pyrenees to the River Bidassoa, where he was joined by other French forces.

\* The Allies blockaded this fortress, a port east of St. Ander, until the close of the war.

July,  
1813

The Allies now occupied all the principal passes opposite the French in the Pyrenean chain. The French garrison left behind in the castle of Pancorbo, defending the narrow defile between Vittoria and Burgos, surrendered to a Spanish bombardment; while Valencia and several ports in old Castile and Aragon were evacuated. Thus the French, though they still held some of the Spanish fortresses and fortified towns—principally in Catalonia, where Suchet was in command—were practically expelled from Spanish soil.

The main object with which the Allies had entered upon the war in the Peninsula was thus almost accomplished; but it was not yet entirely so, as, in order to secure the fruits of the victories obtained, it was essential to completely crush the power of Napoleon.

To this end it was resolved to carry the war into *France*, in order to aid the allied sovereigns in the contest they were waging with the French Emperor in Germany.

But before Wellington could venture to do this it was essential to reduce the two fortresses of St. Sebastian and Pampeluna, in order that their garrisons might not interfere with the Allied line of communication. The former of these was accordingly besieged, and the latter blockaded, while the passes of the Pyrenees were held against the French—the Allied army extending from the Bidassoa, in front of St. Sebastian, on the left, to the pass of Ronscevalles, north of Pampeluna, on the right.

The failure of an expedition under Sir John Murray, sent to take Tarragona in June 1813,<sup>1813</sup> was at this moment a disappointment to Wellington, as its withdrawal left Suchet, in Catalonia, comparatively free to move to the relief of Pampeluna, should he determine to.

But Wellington did not let this influence the prosecution of his plans; and thus, after “years of toil and combats, admired rather than understood, Lord Wellington, emerging from the chaos of the Peninsular struggle, crowned the Pyrenees—a recognised conqueror.” \*

#### SIEGE OF ST. SEBASTIAN

*Commenced July 9th; terminated September 9th, 1813*

(See plan facing page 325)

St. Sebastian was a fortified stronghold situated upon a low, sandy peninsula jutting out into the Bay of Biscay. Except on the south side it is surrounded by water—the River Urumea, which is unfordable for about two hours before and after high water, forming its boundary to the east.

To the north of the fortress rises the Monte Orgullo, which is washed by the sea, and crowned by the castle of La Mota. Separated as it was from St. Sebastian itself by a line of defensive works, this castle could be held after the fall of the fortress which it commands.

\* *English Battles in the Peninsula*, by Sir William Napier, 1852, p. 304.

July,  
1813

The land front to the south stretching across the isthmus between the Urumea and the sea consisted of a high rampart with half-bastions at either end, and a lofty casemated bastion in the centre; while in advance of this was a strong hornwork; then further south a small redoubt formed of casks (termed the Cask Redoubt); then the suburb of St. Martin; then the ridge of San Bartolomeo, and upon this stood the convent of that name and other buildings, which could be made defensible as outworks.

On the eastern bank of the River Urumea, over which a bridge existed near the suburb of St. Catherine, stretched a sandy plain called the Chofre Sand Hills, at the north-east point of which rose the Monte Olia.

St. Sebastian was not a fortress of the first class, capable of resisting a regular and continuous siege; but, nevertheless, it was a place of considerable strength, both from the nature of the works, the dominating and detached position of the castle, and the difficulty of approaching it on the east side across the tidal river of the Urumea. Its weak point, however, lay upon this east side, where the rampart, 27 feet in height and not well flanked, was exposed to the fire of batteries placed upon the Chofre Sand Hills, which could command it within effective range. A force attacking from that direction could also place artillery on Monte Olia, which would be of service in keeping down the fire of the enemy's guns on Monte Orgullo.

In the few days which had elapsed between the

battle of Vittoria and the appearance of the Allies before St. Sebastian, the Governor-General Emanuel Rey had made great exertions to improve the defences and enable the fortress to stand a siege. Many of the inhabitants were sent elsewhere in order to reduce the numbers to be fed; 76 heavy guns were mounted on the ramparts; the convent of San Bartolomeo and the St. Martin suburbs were occupied; a redoubt and outer line of defence were erected at this point; and the bridge over the Urumea was burnt.

The French garrison, which had been reinforced from the sea owing to the British naval force being too weak upon the coast to prevent it, numbered about 3,000.

The besieging force, consisting of about 10,000 men under Sir Thomas Graham, with 40 guns, arrived on July 9th; the siege dépôt being established at Passages, about a mile and a half from the Chofre Sand Hills.

The Allied plan of attack was to approach both from the south and east, working up from the south against the convent of San Bartolomeo and the hornwork; but to establish the main batteries on the Chofre Sand Hills, and, after making a breach in the eastern rampart, endeavour to carry the place by assault on that side.

Between July 10th and 14th Graham erected batteries against the convent and redoubt of San Bartolomeo, which he took by assault on July 17th. On the 19th the French were driven from the Cask Redoubt; and on the 20th all

July  
20-24,  
1813

the breaching batteries opened from the Chofre Sand Hills.

Between this and July 23rd a continuous and heavy fire was kept up from these batteries, and also from guns mounted on Monte Olia and near the convent of San Bartolomeo, against the eastern wall, the hornwork, and other points ; and soon two breaches—the Greater and the Lesser, see plan—were made, on the eastern side.

The defensive works, however, adjacent to the breaches, and those of the hornwork which flanked these breaches, were as yet undestroyed—a point important to notice—the heaviest fire having been devoted, from the first, to create the breaches themselves.

By this time it had become probable that the siege would be shortly interrupted by the French, now under Marshal Soult, who had been sent from Germany by the Emperor to supersede Joseph after the battle of Vittoria.

Having arrived about the middle of July, Soult had collected nearly 80,000 men at the foot of the mountains between the Bidassoa and St. Jean Pied du Port ; and on July 22nd, in a proclamation to his army, had announced that it was his design “to chase Wellington beyond the Ebro.”

It being important to capture St. Sebastian, if practicable, before the approach of Soult, the assault was ordered for the morning of July 24th ; but some houses adjoining the eastern rampart having been set on fire by the siege batteries, such a conflagration raged near the breaches that it was

deferred until after dark—a measure which had July 24, unfortunate consequences, as in the interval <sup>1813</sup> obstacles were accumulated behind the breaches, and the darkness was in many ways unfavourable to the attack.

The storming columns consisted of about 2,000 men. One was to attack the Greater Breach, one the Lesser Breach, and a third was to sweep the curtain after the breaches had been won. Moving out after dark, they began to cross the space between the Urumea and the fortress (about 300 yards) over rocks slippery with sea-weed, and across the sandy river-bed full of deep holes. At this time a mine which had been prepared against the hornwork was exploded, causing great confusion among the French, who for a moment abandoned that part of the work which flanked the breaches.

Had it been possible to then press the assault very rapidly it might have succeeded: but the men came up but slowly over the uneven and slippery ground; and not in good order, for they had been somewhat shaken from having been for several minutes under the fire of their own batteries on the Chofre Sand Hills. This arose from the fact that the explosion of the mine at the horn-work, which was to have been the signal for these batteries to cease fire, had not been heard, owing to distance and weather; and in the darkness the assaulting columns were not visible.

When the latter reached the breaches the enemy had recovered confidence, and received them with a deadly front and flank fire of grape and musketry. Every kind of missile was hurled down

July 24,  
1813 upon them from the adjacent ramparts, and those who survived this ordeal and mounted the breach saw before them a sheer descent, of several feet, to the ground, upon which still blazed the burning houses of the town.

Here, as had been the case at Badajoz, all efforts to carry the breaches were repulsed. The columns then became intermixed, fell into confusion, and retreated in disorder towards the Urumea, the Allied loss during the siege having been about 1,800.

Thus the first assault of St. Sebastian failed, and the chief causes of this may be said to have been these: the ramparts adjoining the breaches were not sufficiently destroyed or made untenable, so that the fire from them was very destructive; the ground over which the columns crossed obliged them to advance on a narrow front and without any cohesion; and lastly, the assault was made at night, instead of by daylight.

Wellington, who was away observing Soult's movements, had written to Graham thus on July 20th \*: "I believe the storm ought to take place at daylight, particularly if the defences are effectually destroyed"; and it is stated † that he had later also given instructions for the attack which terminated in these words: "Fair daylight must be taken for the assault." It was accordingly ordered for daylight on the 24th when the tide suited, but the conflagration having necessitated its postponement, it was then considered

\* *Wellington Despatches* (Ed. 1852), vol. vi. p. 611.

† Napier's *Peninsular War* (Ed. 1840), vol. vi. p. 83.

better not to wait until the following morning, especially as it was believed that the fire of the batteries through the day would prevent the garrison from strengthening the defences near the breaches.

The disadvantages of assaulting a fortress by night are evident, and were exemplified here and at Badajoz. The chances of mistaking the shortest way to the breach, and of confusion or even panic arising, and also the difficulty of restoring order when once lost, are all increased by darkness ; but, on the other hand, surprise is more possible than by day, and the attacking columns are likely to suffer less from the fire of the works in the advance. The ground and other circumstances must decide in each case the best time to choose ; but the difficulty of decision was increased at St. Sebastian by the necessity of suiting the hour to the tide, and the knowledge that Soult might at any moment endeavour to raise the siege, which, as a matter of fact, he did upon the following day.

After the failure of the assault, Wellington repaired to St. Sebastian, but the Allied ammunition was now nearly exhausted ; supplies of warlike stores expected from England had not arrived, and as on the next day (July 25th) Soult approached, the siege was abandoned and converted into a blockade.

Soult now commenced a series of movements with a view to first relieving Pampeluna and then

July 25 St. Sebastian, and the operations in the Pyrenees  
to which followed are termed usually the  
Aug. 2,  
1813

#### BATTLES OF THE PYRENEES

*July 25th to August 2nd, 1813*

(See Map VI., facing page 321)

These operations were rather intricate in character, and included several combats and battles, some of which were severely contested. They form an interesting study in mountain warfare, but to understand them in their details, maps on a large scale showing the mountain ranges, with passes, roads, and all other features of the country, must be referred to.

The following sketch of them gives, with the map, a general description of their object and nature.

Soult, after taking over the chief command of the army, had succeeded to a great extent in restoring confidence to the French troops, who attributed the reverses they had suffered chiefly to their former leader, Joseph. Having displayed great energy in the organization of his forces, he much increased the defences of Bayonne, and when he commenced the movements we are about to describe, was watching the northern issues from the passes over the main and secondary ranges of the Pyrenees, from the right bank of the Bidassoa, where it joins the sea, to St. Jean Pied du Port, upon his left. His right, under Reille, was north of Vera, with Villatte in reserve near the mouth of the Bidassoa; his centre, under D'Erlon, near Ainhoa; and his left, under Clausel, near St. Jean Pied du Port, north of Ronscesvalles. Head-

quarters were at Ascain, and cavalry between the Nivelle and the Nive. Excluding the garrisons of Bayonne, St. Sebastian, Pampeluna, etc., and the forces in Catalonia, Soult had available for the field about 76,000 men and 86 guns.

Wellington faced him with about 82,000 men along the chain of the Pyrenees. His right under Hill stretched from Ronscesvalles and Altobiscar (occupied by Byng, with some Spaniards) to Maya; the 7th Division was at Echallar; the Light at Vera; while headquarters were near Yanzi (at Lesaca). All these points were important mountain passes.\* The Spaniards prolonged the left towards Irun.

In support, Cole's Division was north of Zubiri; Picton near Lanz; and the 6th Division at Estevan, where roads meet near the pass of Dona Maria.

The cavalry were chiefly on the St. Sebastian-Pampeluna road. A few guns only were in the front line.

The main chain of the Pyrenees, and its subsidiary range by Maya and Echallar, throw out many spurs to the north and south; and Wellington's troops were so disposed as to watch the chief paths or roads leading up the valleys between these spurs, and over the passes towards St. Sebastian and Pampeluna.

Soult had succeeded in keeping his plan of attack completely secret, and had made his preparations with much skill. On the morning of the 25th he moved rapidly forward, his troops

\* Most of the entrenching tools were required at St. Sebastian, and no entrenchments were thrown up at these points.

July 25  
to  
Aug. 2,  
1813

carrying four days' provisions, with the intention of threatening the British centre at Maya, while he made his real attack against Wellington's right at Ronscesvalles. To aid in this purpose a great portion of Reille's corps on his right had been brought over to his left.

His object was to relieve Pampeluna, and then having communicated with Suchet to the south-east, press back Wellington westward to St. Sebastian. This, together with an advance towards the fortress from the north, would, he hoped, compel him to raise the siege. Accompanying his army was a large convoy of supplies for Pampeluna.

The attack against the right was so courageously pressed by Clausel, who was superior in numbers, that the Allies were driven in from Altobiscar, and after a severe combat at Ronscesvalles the pass was practically *turned* to the eastward, though the southern crest was still maintained by the defenders.

At Maya, also, D'Erlon, whose troops did not merely threaten but attacked with vehemence, carried all but the last ridge of the pass,\* and the loss of the Allies at this point was about 1,500.

The passes having thus been practically won by the French, the Allies now retired towards Zubiri, and thence, on the 26th, to a position near Sorauren, covering the junction of the roads from Maya (by Marcalain), and Ronscesvalles to Pampeluna. Napier writes: "The centre and right of the

\* Wellington considered that the resistance at Maya would have more fully succeeded, had not the officer commanding allowed his attention to be diverted from his own front to what was occurring on his right.

British position being now all abandoned, alarm July 25 and dismay spread far and wide in the rear"; the garrison of Pampeluna made a sally, and the Condé de Bisbal, in command of the blockading force, spiked his guns and destroyed his magazines to prevent them falling into the enemy's hands.

It had been of advantage to the French that when these operations commenced Wellington was at St. Sebastian, some miles from the point of attack. When he heard of Soult's success he at once ordered Graham to raise the siege of St. Sebastian, taking up a defensive position to the south of the Bidassoa, and the troops east of Vera to march to Pampeluna; while he galloped off himself towards Hill in the valley of Bastan, and thence to Sorauren, above Pampeluna.

Seeing Clause's troops on the ridge to the north of Sorauren, he wrote orders on the parapet of a bridge there, to hasten up the 6th Division (from Estevan) and other troops, to the position near Sorauren (by roads through Marcalain, etc., to avoid their being intercepted by the French in the Lanz Valley), and then passed on to the front.

His presence had a material effect upon the French movements. At the moment he was seen a shout of welcome was raised by the nearest battalion. "The shrill clamour was taken up by the next regiments, swelling as it ran along the line into that stern and appalling shout which the British soldier is wont to give upon the edge of battle, and which no enemy ever heard unmoved."\*

\* *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, by Sir William Napier, p. 355.

July 25  
to  
Aug. 2,  
1813

Napier tells us that in a conspicuous place he stopped, desirous that both armies should be aware of his arrival, and made the remark (which proved true) that Soult, being a cautious commander, would not attack till he could ascertain the cause of the cheering, which delay would give time for the 6th Division to arrive.

Soult did, in fact, defer the attack till he had been strengthened by troops coming up in his rear; and very naturally. Before him was a strong position, and the cheers of the troops and the presence of Wellington made it clear that the Allies confidently awaited his onset, and caused him to suspect that reinforcements had arrived upon the field.

But at mid-day on the 28th, after a previous combat at Zabaldica, he made a resolute attack on the strong Allied position at Sorauren, where a very bloody battle, which Wellington described as "bludgeon work," took place. Again and again the heights held by the Allies were assailed; but the British regiments, delivering many close bayonet charges, repelled every attempt to carry the position.

The 6th Division had arrived just as the fight was commencing, so that the numbers actually engaged in the first line of the battle were, roughly speaking, French, 25,000; Allies, 12,000; though more troops were in support, or close at hand, on either side.

The losses were very severe at Sorauren, being, Allies, 2,600; French, two generals, and 1,800.

On the 29th the armies remained facing each other, after which Soult began to manoeuvre towards

his right, attempting to relieve St. Sebastian, when July to Wellington, who had now nearly 50,000 men with him, assumed the offensive. Descending from the heights near Sorauren, he carried that village by Aug. 1813 storm,\* and making at the same time dispositions in connection with Graham to turn the enemy's flank, and if possible intercept his retreat, compelled Soult, after hard fighting, to fall back up the river valleys and across the mountain passes towards France. The French position was now very perilous, but, having suffered heavy losses and in some disorder, they managed by August 3rd to escape, chiefly by the passes at Dona Maria, Echallar, and Yanzi, from the net-work of the Allied troops which was closing in upon them.

Both armies now took up much the same positions they had been in when the battles of the Pyrenees began ; during these (between July 25th and August 2nd), the total loss of the French had been over 13,000 men, and that of the Allies over 7,000.

“Pyrenees,” as a bar to the Peninsular medal and a battle-honour, was awarded for these operations, which included ten serious actions.

The Battles of the Pyrenees well illustrate the difficulties which attend the defence of an extended line of country, across which are several passages—whether this line consists of a river, spanned at intervals by bridges, or a mountain chain traversed by passes.

\* This is called “The Second Battle of Sorauren” (July 30th, 1813); sometimes spelt Soraoren and Sauoren.

July to  
Aug.  
1813

Unless the defending army is very much stronger than the attacking one, the commander of the latter, having the power to decide upon the particular point where he will mass his troops and attempt to pierce or turn it, can usually assemble a superior force at that point to the one which his adversary, who has to watch all portions of the line, can oppose to him. Especially is this the case in mountains where the spurs which jut out from the main chain make communication between the defending columns very difficult.

In this instance Soult succeeded in driving back Wellington's right towards Pampeluna.

Under the actual strength of Wellington's force on the night of July 25th, and again on the 27th before Sorauren, had Soult—or D'Erlon, in the centre—advanced more boldly and rapidly, the French chances of victory would have been much increased; but they were not fully aware of Wellington's numbers, and naturally desired, in a mountainous country, where their line of retreat led over difficult and narrow passes, to advance in as great strength as practicable. On this account Soult waited for his rear to close up; but by the time it had done so, Wellington's promptitude had wrested his opportunity from him.

Nowhere in the Peninsular War, not even at Salamanca, were Wellington's quickness and coolness in emergency more exemplified than after he had become aware of Soult's successful attack upon his right. Realising at once the danger, and how it was to be met, he "made at racing speed" \* towards

\* Napier, *Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, p. 354.









Sorauren ; there, with a few orders pencilled on the Aug.  
parapet of the bridge, altered the direction of some 8-30,  
of his columns ; and then, by his presence at the  
front, brought order and confidence out of no little  
perplexity—for the Allied divisions, fiercely attacked  
at different points, and not knowing what was going  
on at other portions of the front, were necessarily  
in want of a directing head.

It has been stated occasionally that Wellington  
did not inspire affection in his troops, owing  
partly to his undemonstrative manner ; but whether  
this was so, or not, he certainly commanded their  
most implicit confidence in him as their leader.  
This was shown here, and on many other occasions.

#### RENEWAL OF THE SIEGE OF ST. SEBASTIAN

The French efforts to relieve Pampeluna and  
St. Sebastian having been defeated, the siege of the  
latter fortress, after a delay awaiting the arrival of  
guns and stores, was renewed upon much the same  
plan as before ; but in the interim the governor had  
greatly strengthened the defences, and constructed  
a second, or interior, rampart behind the Greater  
Breach.

On August 26th, 1813, more heavy ordnance  
and war matériel having arrived from England,  
a continuous fire was opened from the batteries on  
the Chofre Sand Hills against the eastern rampart  
and the breaches in it, and also from the heights  
of San Bartolomeo upon the hornwork.

After four days (on August 30th, 1813) the  
fire of 63 heavy guns had rendered the breaches

Aug. 31, again practicable, and although no lodgment  
1813 had been made in the hornwork, nor the parapets adjoining them been fully destroyed, the artillery of the fortress had been almost entirely silenced.

The assault was then ordered for August 31st at noon, an hour which suited the tide. It was carried out accordingly by three columns directed against the Greater Breach, the Lesser Breach, and a point near the end of the high curtain. The distance to be traversed to the works was rather shorter than at the first assault, as the approaches had been brought nearer to the rampart.

The losses of the assailants at the Greater Breach were, however, so severe, from the tempest of grape and musketry which was poured in upon them, that it seemed at one time as if the failure of July 25th was to be repeated.

On reaching the top of the breach it was found, as before, that there was a drop of many feet to the ground, which was now filled with sword-blades sunk erect and firmly into the earth; while beyond this a formidable interior rampart had been constructed. Hand-grenades, shells, stones, etc., were hurled down upon the assaulting columns, and a heavy flanking fire of musketry was kept up upon the breach from a portion of the works adjacent to it.

The troops fell in great numbers. The survivors retired to the foot of the breach, and shouts of victory were raised by the French on the ramparts.

At this crisis an expedient was resorted to which could only have been successful with very steady troops. The assaulting columns at the foot of the breach were directed to halt and lie down,

while 47 guns played close over their heads Aug. 31 upon the enemy's ramparts, and especially the <sup>to Sept. 9,</sup> 1813 works flanking the breach. This artillery fire was so accurate and heavy that in a short time the portions played upon were cleared of their defenders, while the guns on them were dismounted, and in about twenty minutes a terrific explosion of numerous powder-barrels and shells took place, blowing 300 of the French into the air.

Then the British troops again rushed forward, and after a desperate conflict succeeded in entering the works. At the same time, the Lesser Breach was successfully stormed by the Portuguese, and the garrison now took refuge in the castle on Monte Orgullo.

Upon this day Soult made another attempt, by throwing bridges over the Bidassoa, to advance and relieve the fortress ; but he was driven back with loss, in the combats of San Marcial and Vera, in which the Spanish and Portuguese troops behaved with much bravery.

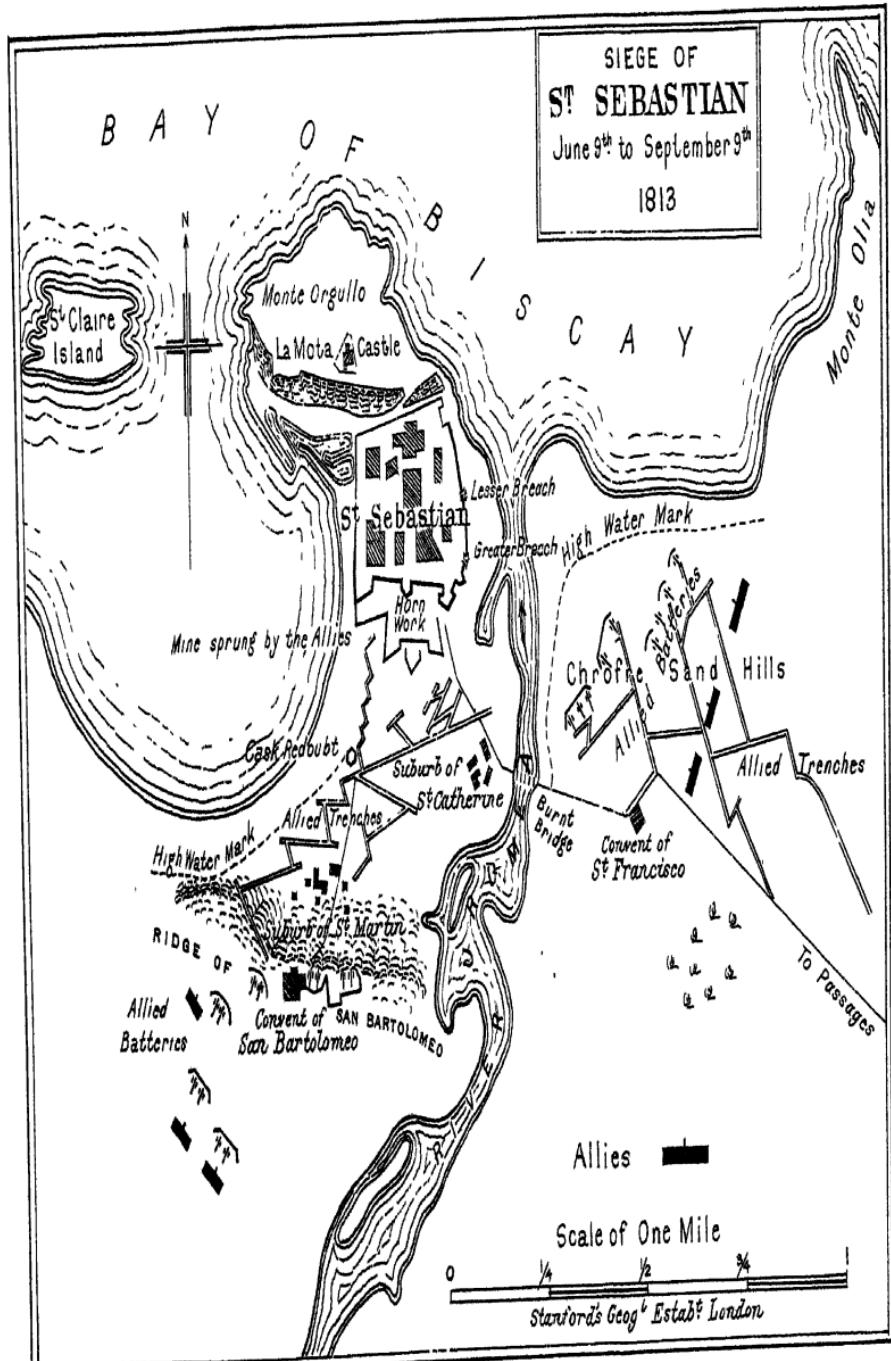
The French governor made a very gallant stand in the castle, but after a bombardment had been kept up for several days, was compelled to surrender (September 9th, 1813).

As at Badajoz, so here, to the deep annoyance of Wellington, great and disgraceful excesses took place in the town after the capture, many cases of spirits having been found and broached in the streets ; while nine-tenths of the town was reduced to ashes, though this was not altogether the work of the troops.

The Allied loss in the second assault of St.



SIEGE OF  
ST SEBASTIAN  
June 9<sup>th</sup> to September 9<sup>th</sup>  
1813



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## PASSAGE OF THE BIDASSOA 326

River (which forms the boundary between Spain Oct. 7,  
and France). 1813

### PASSAGE OF THE BIDASSOA

*October 7th, 1813*

(See plan facing page 333)

A portion of the boundary line above alluded to runs along the lower part of the River Bidassoa.

West of the high road from Irun through St. Jean de Luz to Bayonne, this river flows in a wide sandy valley, which at high tide is covered by the sea. At low water it is fordable here, as well as higher up, for a few hours at certain places ; but the sandy bed shifts and changes after heavy rains, and frequently a sudden rise of 16 feet takes place with the tide. For an army to cross it, therefore, between Irun and the sea, in face of an enemy, is an operation of risk, since communication with the south bank is very liable to interruption.

The bridge on the Irun-Bayonne road had been destroyed by the French. Below this there was no bridge, and above it the next left standing was at Vera, whence the river bends southwards towards Lesaca.

Along the whole course of the Bidassoa, between Lesaca and Irun, hills of a rugged character come close down to the right or French bank ; while on the left (or Spanish) bank the chief height is that of St. Marcial, near the Irun-Bayonne road ; and commanding the river at this point.

On the French side one high mountain ridge

Oct. 7,  
1813.

extends from near Biriatu eastward, terminating in the Great Rhune, 2,800 feet high, nearly inaccessible except on the eastward side; and this ridge throws down several wooded spurs towards the river. It bears different names at various points, these being (from Biriatu) the Bildox hill; then, after a break, the Mandale height; the Bayonette, the spurs of which descend towards Vera; the Commissari, the Puerto, the Saddle,\* and the Great Rhune.

To the north and north-west of Biriatu, nearer the mouth of the river, are other heights—named Louis XIV., Calvaire, the Croix des Bouquets, the Café Republicain, the Sans Culottes, etc.

The French occupied the above formidable position in two lines:—

The first ran along the bank of the Bidassoa from Croix des Bouquets and Andaya, past Biriatu (which point was comparatively weakly occupied) to the main ridge, and thence along it by the Mandale height past the Bayonette to the Great Rhune. The right, to about Bildox, was under Reille; and the left, from thence to the Great Rhune, under Clausel.

The second extended from St. Jean de Luz, and south of it, to Ascain, from whence also Soult held the country for some distance to the eastward, towards St. Jean Pied du Port.

Earthworks of various descriptions, more or less finished, had been thrown up to strengthen both lines, as shown on the plan, and advanced posts were pushed to the river bank. The main ridge,

\* English designations such as "Saddle," "Boar's Back," etc., are not found in all maps.

with its spurs descending to the Bidassoa, was Oct. 7, defended by redoubts, entrenchments, and abattis ;<sup>1813</sup> and the valley leading from Vera up to the Commissari had been obstructed at several points. Behind all were fortified posts about the River Nive, and the works at Bayonne (see map facing page 321).

Soult, in short, had devoted a month of continuous labour to artificially strengthening this position, which was in itself naturally strong ; and it can be seen that to carry it was likely to prove a most formidable task.

Wellington's plan was to endeavour to deceive Soult into expecting an attack upon his left, by passing a part of the Allied force, chiefly Spanish and Portuguese troops, towards his own right near Ronscesvalles and manœuvring in that direction (which he subsequently did) ; then, to make a simultaneous advance against every part of Soult's line to prevent his reinforcing one portion by another ; and finally to push his most serious attack against the French right to the west of the high road to Bayonne. If he succeeded in this main attack and in *rolling* back the French right, he could turn Soult's left, under Clausel, on the main mountain ridge.

There was the greater probability of success in this movement because the difficulty of surprising a passage of the river near its mouth was so great that an attack in that direction would probably not be expected.

Spanish fishermen were employed for several days, while nominally fishing, in ascertaining the

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whereabouts of fords west of the bridge ; in this way three were discovered between Fuenterrabia and the high road, and their position was made known to officers who were to lead the columns across the river.

On the night of October 6th, 1813, during a violent thunderstorm, pontoons and guns were brought forward to the St. Marcial height and Irun, and the attack was ordered for the following morning, at 7.15, when the tide would suit.

On the right Giron's Spaniards were to advance against the French left in two columns.

The Light Division and the Portuguese were to cross by the bridge at Vera and fords near it, and assault the spur leading to the Bayonette, and the Commissari.

The above troops (about 20,000) formed the right attack ; and the 4th Division, posted on the heights of Santa Barbara, were to form a reserve to it.

A Spanish force was, at a signal from the left, to cross by fords opposite Biriatu and the Mandale height. On its left the 1st Division, some Portuguese, a body of cavalry, and two brigades of artillery, were to cross by fords near the Irun-Bayonne road close to St. Marcial ; while the 5th Division, with more cavalry and one brigade of artillery, were to do so by the fords near Fuenterrabia, which had been discovered by the fishermen, and then join them. The above troops numbered in all about 24,000.

Sir Thomas Graham commanded the attack on

the extreme left. Reserves were placed near Irun Oct. 7, and behind the St. Marcial hill, where guns were placed to cover the whole operation, and where Wellington took post. Pontoons were to be thrown over the river to facilitate communication as soon as possible.

The Allies also held in rear the passes over the Pyrenees at Echallar, Maya, Ronscesvalles, etc., covering the operations to reduce Pampluna (see map facing page 321).

The attack as planned above was ably carried out on October 7th, 1813, and was entirely unexpected by the enemy. The 5th Division, with Lord Aylmer's separate brigade, were the first to cross the Bidassoa, when they made for the French position at Croix des Bouquets and Sans Culottes, Andaya and the works near it being carried by them.

Then, on a signal made, the 1st Division and the Spaniards crossed in front of the St. Marcial height, covered by the guns upon it, and after a sharp fight the greater portion of the Croix des Bouquets was taken. Next the heights at Biriatu and Bildox fell, being turned through the ravine near the Mandale height. Then the whole French right, afraid of being cut off, retired to Urogne, where a further stand was made.

On the Allied right the troops had some hard fighting among the mountain spurs of the main ridge.

The Light Division, with the Portuguese, almost scrambling up the difficult ascent, attacked the works on the great spur descending from the

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Bayonette, which divides into three points near the river. These were captured, and then, after a severe struggle, the Bayonette itself, the Commissari, and the Puerto were taken.

Giron's Spaniards, still more to the right, behaved with great gallantry on this day. As soon as the Boar's Back had been carried on their left, they attacked the Saddle, which they took, and the French then retired to the flanks of the Great Rhune. Here eight regiments were collected in an almost impregnable position, and though more than one determined assault was made upon it by the Spaniards, it was not taken till the next day. Then the Allies, concentrating towards their right, moved round and took it from the east, the side on which it could be best approached.

No operation of the Peninsular War was more skilfully planned, or better executed, than the passage of the Bidassoa.

Every advantage of ground lay with the French. Their flanks rested on the sea and on an almost inaccessible height (the Great Rhune). Commanding ground on the right bank, covered with earthworks, dominated the river, which was subject to rise and fall with the tide, and only passable at certain times; while from the great ridge, the mountain spurs, descending southwards and crowned with fieldworks, made it difficult for the separated attacking columns to communicate with each other.

Soult, who was at some distance from his right, was completely surprised by the direction of the

main attack, which was well supported by reserves and by the guns on the St. Marcial hill; and most probably, the troops composing his left on the main ridge lost confidence to a great extent when they saw the right wing driven back to Urogne and their own right flank being turned. The repeated defeats their armies had sustained must also by this time have more or less disheartened even the most courageous of the French soldiers.

What contributed greatly to the complete success of Wellington's plan was the secrecy with which it was arranged, and the simultaneous attack upon the whole position. Soult (like Joseph at Vittoria) was perplexed as to his adversary's real object. He could not reinforce his right in time, every part of his force being engaged seriously to its own front, and thus at no important point where a collision took place was he in greater strength than his enemy.

There was hard fighting at the passage of the Bidassoa, but the Allied loss was not extremely heavy—in all, about 1,600; and the French, 1,400.

"Wellington" (writes Napier) "had with overwhelming combinations overwhelmed every point. It was a general's, not a soldiers' battle."

The French army now fell back behind the River Nivelle, where Soult, in anticipation of a retreat, had already selected and fortified a strong position.

Both armies remained quiet for a month, Wellington waiting for the surrender of Pampeluna, and Soult strengthening himself on the Nivelle.

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1813

At length, on October 31st, Pampeluna capitulated. This terminated the British operations in Spain ; and Wellington, concentrating his troops towards his left, prepared for those campaigns in the south of France, which brought the war to its final conclusion.

#### COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

The operations of the campaign of 1813 from its opening to the time when the Allies—Spain having been practically freed from the French yoke—crossed the Bidassoa into France, specially illustrate Wellington's talent as a strategist.

The turning of the French positions behind the Douro and Ebro, the march to the Zadorra, and the passage of the Bidassoa, all evince the thought-out plans of the Commander-in-Chief, which, added to the tactical ability with which he directed the troops in battle, secured a brilliant and conclusive success.

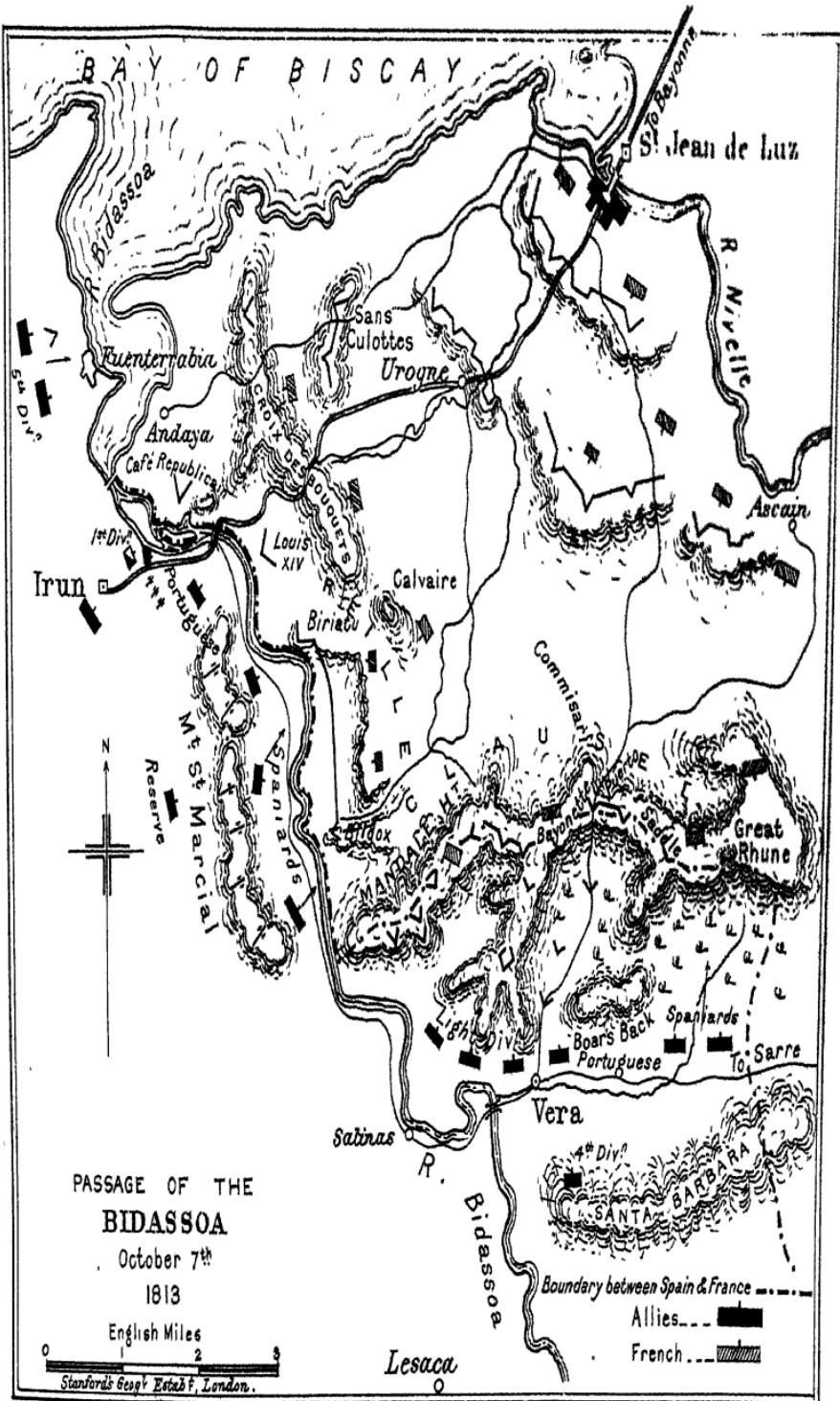
In about one month from the opening of the campaign, Wellington, by long and arduous marches, had turned two strong river-lines ; changed his base from Portugal to St. Ander, thus gaining a shorter and more favourable line of communication than he had formerly possessed ; and brought his enemy to battle before Vittoria, in a position where defeat was likely to be (and was) ruin to him. All this was accomplished with but a nominal loss of life.

There are few more striking examples of successful strategy.

With regard to Wellington's plan at the com-









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mencement of the operations in May, 1813 (see pages 286-7), it can be seen that it necessitated the division of his army into separate portions, and that up to the time when the right and centre, advancing from the south upon the Douro, could join with the left (detached to cross the Esla and turn the French line), there could be little or no communication between these separated parts.

The reasons why this plan was followed by Wellington were probably these :—

1st. Because either portion of his army, if forced back, had a country affording defensible positions upon which to retire, and the result of a repulse was not likely, therefore, to involve more than some loss of time in opening the campaign.

2nd. If he advanced with his whole force from the south against the French line behind the Douro, he would have a strong position to force, and would lose the advantage of joining with the Galicians before he attacked.

3rd. If he endeavoured to turn the French position by the south bank of the Douro, he would have to make a wide circuit over the upper Tormes, and thence skirt the mountains till he could strike the Douro near its source ; and would, as in the second case, lose the direct aid of the Galicians.

4th. If he operated with his whole army in the direction taken by his left, his march would at once disclose his intention ; and Joseph might bring him back by an advance into Portugal.

Thus it was apparently his best plan to make his left (which was to be isolated, and perform the turning movements) as strong as possible, while he

endeavoured to draw the attention of Joseph southwards by the advance of his centre and right.

By operating thus he might expect, if successful, to turn the position of the French ; and then, as he moved forward, would gain strength by the accession of the Spanish insurgents in the north. He would also be able to open a communication with the fleet, and change his line of supplies from Portugal to a shorter one from the northern coast of Spain.

It was, in fact, the relative advantages which this plan offered over every other ; the belief that it was feasible ; the probability of its not being suspected ; and the knowledge of the want of energy of Joseph,—that determined Wellington to hazard it.

Every possible precaution, such as providing a pontoon train and guides for each separate column, was taken to secure the successful march of the bulk of the army forming the left, and many stratagems and ruses, which we need not detail, were resorted to, to make the enemy imagine that operations in other quarters were intended.

The result affords an example of a double line of operations very successfully carried through.

The turning the line of the Ebro was but a repetition, on perhaps a grander scale, of that of the Douro, but the operation was far safer. The army was moving together ; and, even had the design failed in its object of cutting off Joseph from Bayonne, Wellington could, at all events, have gained St. Ander and a new base of operations on the north coast.

It should be noticed that the French evacuation of St. Ander and the possession of the road from it to Burgos were important strategical advantages gained for the Allies by the turning of the Ebro.

"This single blow severed the long connection of the English troops with Portugal, which was thus cast off by the army as a heavy tender is cast off from its towing-rope. All the British military establishments were broken up and transferred by sea to the coast of Biscay."\*

It may be asked, what more could King Joseph have done to have prevented the advance of Wellington across the Douro and the Ebro?

The answer is, that he might, it is stated, have made a greater effort than he did, in the winter of 1812-13, to carry out a plan which had been dictated to him by Napoleon, but which he did not follow; this aimed at the subjugation of the insurgents in the north, and the occupation of Wellington's army by threatening Portugal. Also, that he might have delayed the Allies longer at the Rivers Carrion and Pisuerga. But, as we have before said, in remarking upon the battle of Vittoria, it is not surprising, for several reasons, that King Joseph's movements were undecided in their character.

With regard to the siege of St. Sebastian and the investment of Pampeluna, the former was besieged, and the latter invested only, because it would not have been safe for Wellington to

\* Napier's *Peninsular War* (Ed. 1836), vol. v. p. 542.

advance into France with his line of communication liable to be interrupted by the garrisons of these fortresses; and the matériel necessary to conduct two *sieges* at once was not readily obtainable, so that both could not be conveniently besieged at one time.

It was of consequence to get possession of St. Sebastian as soon as possible, in order to secure its harbour for ships before the rough weather set in; and, therefore, this fortress was besieged. Pampeluna was invested only, as being the less important place of the two, and because it was considered to be so badly provisioned that it could not long hold out. It may be added, also, that, owing to Murray's failure before Tarragona, Suchet was left free to march to succour Pampeluna, had Wellington found it practicable to besiege it, and might have compelled the siege to be raised.

One lesson taught by the siege of St. Sebastian is the important part which fortresses may play in war, and the delay which one, well defended, may cause to an enemy. St. Sebastian, not even a first-class fortress, detained Wellington sixty-three days, giving Soult time to re-organize the French troops, completely broken by the battle of Vittoria, and undertake the offensive in the Battles of the Pyrenees.

This importance was strongly brought out, too, in connection with the siege of the castle of Burgos in 1812; and, indeed, the principal checks which Wellington met with in the Peninsular War were the failures at various times to reduce Ciudad-

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Rodrigo, Badajoz, Burgos, and St. Sebastian, within the period which could be devoted to the siege of these strongholds.

This illustrates the advantages of fortresses ; but their garrisons, in a long defence, have at times caused an undue drain upon the army and resources of a country. “ Neither mountains, nor rivers, nor fortresses, nor Roman walls, nor Chinese walls ever saved a nation ”\* as decisive victories by land, or at sea, have done.

A general cause of want of success in some of the Peninsular operations—especially at the sieges—was that stores demanded from England were not sent out in sufficient time, and systematically. There was every desire to meet the demands made, but the importance of their being rapidly complied with was not, apparently, fully understood.

Wellington’s despatches show that he was constantly remonstrating against the delay in forwarding supplies and matériel. Thus, when before St. Sebastian, he writes to Lord Bathurst on August 18th, 1813 : “ Your lordship will see by my report that we are still waiting for the battering train, and we have thus lost sixteen days in the month of August, since I should have renewed the attack on St. Sebastian if I had had the means. This is a most important period in the campaign, particularly for the attack of a place on the Bay

\* *The British in the Iberian Peninsula, 1808-14.* Paper read before the Aldershot Military Society by T. Miller Maguire, LL.D., February 1905. Sebastopol, in the Crimean War, is an instance of a fortress becoming a heavy drain upon a nation.

of Biscay. A British minister cannot too often have under his view the element by which he is surrounded, and cannot make his preparations for the operations of a campaign at too early a period."

Before this, on August 7th also, he had written : "I enclose Colonel Dickson's report on the state of the ordnance and stores to continue the siege of St. Sebastian. When that expected in the *Three Sisters* and *Friendship* shall arrive, you will see that we shall be still very deficient in ammunition, and even in ordnance."

But it is unnecessary to enlarge further on this subject. The ammunition, we know, ran short after the failure of the first assault. Napier writes \* that on August 19th the battering train arrived from England, and a second one on the 23rd ; but adds, "With characteristic negligence this enormous armament had been sent out from England with no more shot and shells than would suffice for one day's consumption."

Alison, in his *History of Europe*,† has a forcible passage with regard to this want of appreciation of the importance of *time*—i.e. of there being no delay—in sending out the warlike equipment and supplies requisitioned from England during the Peninsular War. This, as it is especially interesting with reference to what has occurred since in the Crimean and more recent campaigns, we quote below :—

"Men could not be more zealous than the

\* Napier's *Peninsular War* (Ed. 1840), vol. vi. p. 186-7.

† *History of Europe* (Ed. 1848), vol. xvi. p. 384.

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British Government were at this period \* in the prosecution of the contest, and none ever made such stupendous efforts to carry it on as they did in this year. But they were still insensible, notwithstanding all the disasters which neglect of it had formerly occasioned, to the value of *time* in war. . . .

“So frequently has this ignorance of the simplest principles of military combination, on the part of government, marred the greatest efforts, or disconcerted the best-laid enterprises of the British nation, that it deserves the serious consideration of all those who have the direction of the studies of youth, whether some instruction on the subject should not form part of the elementary education, of all those at least who are likely, from their station or prospects, to be called to the supreme direction of affairs.”

He adds, too,† speaking of the English people and some of their characteristics : “Though naturally brave, and always fond of military renown, they are the reverse of warlike in their ordinary habits. Naval supremacy had long since made them trust to their wooden walls for defence, and commercial opulence opened more attractive pursuits than the barren heritage of the sword. In peace they invariably relax the sinews of war ; no amount of experience can persuade them to take any antecedent measures either to avert disaster or ensure success ; they constantly expect that, without the least previous preparation, and

\* Referring to the year 1813.

† *History of Europe* (Ed. 1848), vol. xiv. pp. 239-40.

with greatly inferior numbers, their armies, newly raised, uninstructed, and inexperienced are to vanquish their enemies in every encounter."

Few will deny that there are portions of the passages above quoted which, though written with reference to the Peninsular War, are in the main, applicable to-day, and embody truths at times forgotten.

The operations before St. Sebastian, with its harbour opening upon the Bay of Biscay, afford an illustration of how the advantages which the command of the sea confers may, at times, not be understood or turned to account.

Wellington was very sensible of the value of naval co-operation to him throughout his campaigns. In the case of St. Sebastian an ineffective command of the sea meant that the French garrison might be reinforced, and that supplies sent to him from England might be captured.

He writes to Lord Bathurst on July 3rd, 1813 : "I wish to make the siege of Sebastian, which is one of quite a different description from that of Pampeluna ; but I cannot undertake it till I shall know whether we are secure at sea."

Then, on July 10th, he points out that, the blockade of the coast being totally inadequate, the arrival of his own supplies was uncertain, and the French were able to throw troops into St. Sebastian : "Your lordship will see that the blockade of the coast is merely nominal. The enemy have reinforced by *sea* the only two posts they have on the north coast of Spain.

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Again, on August 4th: “I intreat your lordship to consider these points, and let me know whether Government will or will not send a sufficient naval force to co-operate with the army in this siege.”

And again, on August 18th: “If we had a sufficient naval force we might, if the weather permitted, make an attack from the sea at the same time that we should make the attack upon the breaches from the land.”

It should be understood that at this time the war with America, which had broken out in 1812, was causing a great demand upon the naval resources of the country ; still, it seems that “one frigate and a few brigs and cutters, fit only to carry despatches,” which Wellington mentions as being the assistance furnished him at this point, was inadequate.

When Wellington passed the Bidassoa and invaded France, he obtained, in French territory, the commanding salient of the Great Rhune, which much strengthened his position. He had also previously satisfied himself by an examination of the whole range of the Western Pyrenees that, if St. Sebastian and Pampeluna fell, he could, being in possession of the Pyrenean passes, establish himself so solidly and strongly along the mountains (as behind a second “Lines of Torres Vedras”), that should events enable Napoleon once more to devote his energies to the invasion of Spain, he would find it difficult to dislodge him.

By the passage of the river he also secured the port of Fuenterrabia, which, though bad in winter,

was of great use at other times of the year ; and the command of the road from Irun to Vera, which was of value to him, shortening as it did his communications with his troops to the right.

It is interesting to compare Wellington's attack upon the French line beyond the Bidassoa with Soult's upon the Allied line along the Pyrenees on July 25th.

In both cases the attack was a complete surprise ; in both the Commander-in-Chief of the line attacked was not at the moment near the point which it was the main desire to carry ; in both the principal attack succeeded ; in both other portions of the line were threatened ; but in Wellington's advance all parts of the line were more heavily assailed, seven columns crossing the Bidassoa at various points, and the principal attack, when it had succeeded, was pressed and supported with greater vigour. This was probably one, and a chief, cause of the different result, though it must be added that it was most difficult for Soult to continuously push his attack through the mountain passes.

The best way to defend a mountainous frontier is a matter on which military opinion has differed. Some advocate what may be termed a "forward" defence—*i.e.* that the crest of the mountains, at the passes over them, should be held in strength, with supports and reserves in rear ; others contend that the crest should be only lightly occupied, the serious resistance being made as the enemy issues from the passes on the defender's side.

Colonel F. Adam, in an interesting paper on the Battles of the Pyrenees,\* touching upon what these suggest in connection with our north-west frontier of India, points out that Wellington's defence of his position from St. Sebastian to Pampeluna was a forward one. What deductions, however applicable to other and different positions, can fairly be drawn from this must be uncertain.

The lessons taught by the Battles of the Pyrenees, by the passage of the Bidassoa, and we may add also by those of the Nivelle, the Nive, and the Adour later on, appear to be rather these general ones, that (as we have said before †) any defensive line, whether mountain or river, may possibly under certain circumstances be turned or pierced ; and that, then, reserves in rear may be too late to save the day.

This points to the necessity of constant vigilance and careful outpost work, as well as to the importance of having troops in reserve as close as practicable to the points at which the main resistance must be made. The stronger the works and the more perfect the communications throughout, of course, the better.

In the case of Wellington's line along the chain of the Pyrenees on July 25th, 1813, from Altobiscar to Vera, it was unavoidably much extended, and in this sense weak. He was obliged to stretch it so as to cover both St. Sebastian and Pampeluna. Entrenchments and fieldworks would scarcely have

\* *Campaign of the Pyrenees, 1813*, by Colonel F. Adam, of the Quarter-Master-General's Staff, India, read before the Aldershot Military Society, December 15th, 1896.

† See pages 320 and 321.

enabled him to completely repulse Soult's first attack upon his right, though they might have further delayed the French advance.

The line was *turned* upon the right, which, as Wellington explains in a letter to Lord Bathurst from Lesaca \* on August 4th, 1813, necessitated its abandonment.

At the passage of the Bidassoa Soult's entrenchments and fieldworks did not save his position from being carried at more than one point.

Thus too much implicit confidence is not to be placed in entrenchments and earthworks, though their value in strengthening a position should never be overlooked ; and it may be added that this remark must not be pushed too far, or taken to apply to a series of formidable defensive lines, compact, well-garrisoned, and with the flanks secure, such as were the "Lines of Torres Vedras."

With respect to what has been said as to troops in reserve and their position, it should be noticed that the French reserves, at the passage of the Bidassoa, did not succeed in concentrating at the important points in time ; and that Wellington had great difficulty in assembling a sufficient force at Sorauren on July 28th, 1813, early enough to repulse Soult.

It has been asserted that Soult had always meant to fall back from the Bidassoa to the Nivelle, making his serious stand there ; and that, on this account, he offered less resistance than he otherwise would have done at the former river : but if this were so, it is difficult to explain the month's hard

\* *Wellington Despatches* (Ed. 1852) vol. vi. p. 849.

labour which had been devoted to strengthening the line of the Bidassoa by the fieldworks erected at all important points of the ground along which his army had been huddled.

By the position taken up beyond the Bidassoa, a vast hostile army, for the first time since the French Revolution, was permanently encamped within the territory of France. “And thus was England—which throughout the contest had been the most persevering and resolute of all the opponents of the Revolution, and whose Government had never yet either yielded to the victories or acknowledged the chiefs which it had placed at the head of affairs—the first of all the Powers of Europe which succeeded in planting “its victorious standards on the soil of France.” \*

Considering the question from a military point of view only, Wellington would have preferred to delay the invasion of France until he had completely reduced the French posts under Suchet, in Catalonia ; strengthened his own position upon the frontier ; and more thoroughly equipped and reorganized his army : but the British Cabinet considered that an immediate advance into French territory would greatly aid the cause of the Allies in Europe.

On this account he yielded, writing thus to Lord Bathurst † from Lesaca on September 19th, 1813, after the fall of St. Sebastian : “ I think I ought and will bend a little to the views of the Allies, if it can be done with safety to the army,

\* *History of Europe* (Ed. 1848), vol. xvii. p. 346.

† *Wellington Despatches* (Ed. 1852), vol. vii. p. 10.

notwithstanding that I acknowledge I should prefer to turn my attention to Catalonia, as soon as I shall have secured this frontier."

This affords another instance of Wellington's "prudence,"\* as well as his anxiety within all due limits to meet the views of Government, though they might not be entirely his own. It shows, also, that considerations other than military must often influence the leader of an army.

The invasion, undertaken when it was, had great results and was most successful; but in a military sense alone it would certainly have been safer to have first completely reduced Catalonia, in order that the French there might not cause difficulty in Spain when the Allies had passed on into France.

At this stage in the contest, when Napoleon's Armies had been, in effect, expelled from the Peninsula, which they had invaded in 1807, it is convenient to sum up briefly what Wellington had achieved in the intervening six years.

In 1808 Junot was defeated by him, and afterwards capitulated at Lisbon.

In 1809 Soult was driven out of Portugal, and Joseph (with Victor) defeated at Talavera.

In 1810 Massena was defeated at Busaco, and checked at the Lines of Torres Vedras.

In 1811 Massena was driven out of Portugal, having lost within its boundaries over 30,000 men.

In 1812 Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz were taken, Marmont was defeated at Salamanca, and Madrid entered.

\* See pages 170 and 172.

In 1813 Joseph was defeated at Vittoria, St. Sebastian was taken, the Peninsula freed, and France invaded.

Many strong positions had been surprised or turned; several pitched battles and numberless minor engagements had been fought, in almost all of which the Allied forces had been victorious. After some reverses Lisbon, Almeida, Elvas, Ciudad-Rodrigo, Badajoz, Cadiz, the castle of Burgos, St. Sebastian, Pampeluna, and other smaller strongholds had all been captured or had surrendered.

This had been accomplished under serious difficulties, military and political, with a comparatively small British army, augmented by Spanish and Portuguese levies; accomplished, too, in the face of a large host drawn almost entirely from one great military nation which had subdued half Europe.

What largely contributed to these victories was the superiority in arms—secured by the effective use of their weapons—which marked the British troops at this period; a superiority which has at times been lost sight of in histories of this war.

Earl Roberts, in a recent strong and important appeal to the nation,\* has urged the necessity of steadily striving for this superiority in future wars, pointing out that it was constant practice in archery —*i.e.* with the powerful long-bow—which won for England, in the past, Falkirk, Crecy, Poitiers, and

\* Letter from Earl Roberts, K.G., V.C., on "Rifle Shooting as a National Pursuit," *Morning Post*, June 12th, 1905.

Agincourt ; and that it is skill in marksmanship with the rifle which will probably, more than anything else, decide battles in the future.

In 1866, in the war between Prussia and Austria, superiority in arms was secured to Prussia mainly by the rapidity of fire of the breech-loading needle-gun over the muzzle-loader—*i.e.* by the weapon itself.

In the Peninsular War and at Waterloo it was, perhaps, obtained chiefly by securing, through tactics, a preponderating mass of fire, and by the use of the bayonet ; but it was obtained, and effectually obtained. “ Brown Bess ” had but a short range, and was not an arm of precision ; but it was the firearm of that day, and there was no better. To use it effectively, drill and discipline—to train the soldier to hold it straight and low, and reserve his fire for close quarters—were what was most required.

To the instruction which imparted this Wellington added a battle formation very superior to that of the enemy opposed to him, which enabled every musket to be brought into play. This formation (the line against the column) was—with the precision and effective handling of the artillery and use of the bayonet—decisive of many great battles ; and the British musketry fire was so well directed and destructive that Baron Marbot writes thus as to it,\* alluding to the battle of Busaco : “ The ” (*i.e.* the French) “ infantry had to contend not only against a mass of obstacles and the roughest possible ascent, but also against the best marksmen

\* *Memoirs of Baron de Marbot*, translated by Arthur John Butler, 1892, vol. ii. p. 115.

in Europe. Up to this time the English were the only troops who were perfectly practised in the use of small arms, whence their firing was far more accurate than that of any other infantry. . . . We had a melancholy experience of this at Busaco"—and then he describes how murderous the British volleys were on that occasion.

No further arguments are needed to prove the importance of this superiority in arms to a nation, whether it be obtained by accuracy, rapidity, or skilful application of fire; by the excellence of a weapon in itself, or by its more effective use.

It means victory to troops possessing it, when well led.

The Peninsular campaigns were, on the whole, a wonderful series of triumphs. They made it abundantly evident that Wellington could more than cope with the most distinguished marshals of France; and established his renown, and that of the troops whom he had led, beyond all cavil or question.

But he was shortly to add to these deeds upon the soil of France, and to achieve upon the fields of Belgium a crowning victory over an adversary yet more formidable than any of the great leaders whom he had encountered in Portugal or Spain.







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